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SERMONS

DAILY LIFE AND DUTY.

66997

By GEORGE DAWSON, M.A.

EDITED BY HIS WIFE.

"And a highway shall be there, and a way;
it shall be called THE WAY OF HOLINESS: the wayfaring men,
though fools, shall not err therein."

THIRD EDITION.

LONDON:
C. KEGAN PAUL & CO., 1, PATERNOSTER SQUARE.
1878.

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SERMONS

ON

DAILY LIFE AND DUTY.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

Edited by his Wife, and uniform with the present Volume.

PRAYERS

WITH

A DISCOURSE ON PRAYER.

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SERMONS

ON DISPUTED POINTS

AND SPECIAL OCCASIONS.

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THE KEY-NOTE.

"Si com dist la Ste Escripture
Amours est fors, amours est dure,
Amours soustient, amours endure,
Amours revient et tousjours dure;
* * * * *
Amours fist Dieu venir en place,
Amours lui fist ûre chair prendre;
* * * * *
Amours le fist les maulx reprendre,
Amours lui fist les bons aprendre,
Amours le fist a nous venir,
Amours nous fait a lui tenir."

Romaunt of the Rose.

"Yea, saith the Holy Escripture,
True Love sustains, is puissant, sure,
True Love abides all hard assays,
True Love returns and ever stays;
* * * * *
Love fetcht our God to earthly place,
Through flesh to show His shining face;
* * * * *
Love makes Him strive the Bad to mend,
Love makes the Good to Him attend,
Love brings Him ever to our side,
Love makes us cling to Him, in Him abide."

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*** *Seven of these Sermons are collated from M. Beauclerc's Reports.*

DOVE-WINGS.

"Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest."—PSALM lv. 6.

"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him."—PSALM xxxvii. 7.

THERE is a law of God of which we cannot too often be reminded, that Use is the inevitable condition of Brightness.

Seek to lock up and hide from the light of day any precious treasure; let it be so placed that it can do nothing for you, and bring nothing to you, and the rust of corruption speedily settles upon it. "To him that hath" (that is, hath used and employed) "shall be given," is the language of Life, as it is the language of Scripture.

Your fine gold, hidden, becomes dim; your diamond, deprived of the light of the sun, loses its brilliancy; a language learned and not spoken, is a language forgotten; an art acquired and not practised, escapes us like smoke.

Now, what is true of Nature is true of the Soul. Spiritual gifts are held on the same tenure as natural ones. There is not a point of our belief that we can vitally retain, except by suffering it continually to do something for us.

To forget and deny God in our creed is what you and I are in small danger of doing: to forget and deny Him in our heart is a temptation continually present. This is especially the case with us men of to-day. The earlier ages were more childlike and trustful; their faith was less intellectual, far more vital than ours.

In these words of David—

"Oh that I had wings like a dove!"

we have the expression of a feeling well known to us all. Not one of you who are now listening to me,—not a man that God has made,—has not, at some period of his life, breathed the same sigh as David. Into a feeling so deep and so general, then, it will be well to look, that we may see whence the desire arises, and how it is to be met.

The hermits of the East, the anchorites of the Desert, are more closely linked with ourselves in feeling than some may at first think. Our impulses are often identical with theirs; and if our actions vary, it is because our standard of Right, not our

nature, is changed. In the life of each man there are hours when he sighs for the desert; hours when, bowed down by the sense of sin in himself, and the sight of it in others, wearied out by striving to teach a stiff-necked generation, disheartened at seeing the "good cause" advance so slowly, he can scarcely refrain from following, in his small way, the example of that emperor who exchanged the palace for the cloister, and the crown for the cowl. These are David's dove-wing moments. The emperor Charles uttered in deeds what we have all breathed in sighs. We do and we must long to flee away and be at rest; but then it must remain a longing, nothing more.

Suppose this desire realized, suppose the dove-wings gained; concede the point of possibility, and ask whether the thing were to be desired. Life would quickly answer, No. Only in the thick of the fight does the spirit acquire strength, and only by continual wrestling does the soul become strong.

Go again to daily life for illustration. The muscles never exercised, how feeble they are! the sinews never strung for exertion, how puny they become! Now, in our desire to escape from the conflicts of life, we resemble wrestlers, who, com-

manded to strive for a prize, should avoid encountering all opponents; we resemble mariners, who, bound for a distant port, seek refuge in some quiet bay from the storms of the open sea. To wish the fight over, and sigh that the storm were at an end, is a natural and a God-inspired feeling; but to run away from the battle, and refuse to work in the storm, is a cowardly temptation that springs from indolence, the root of all evil.

This longing for rest, when it becomes more than a momentary desire, is a sickness of the soul, and needs a spiritual physician. Because to-night I am weary of myself and weary of the world, shall I calmly and deliberately prepare to strike work to-morrow? God forbid! To-night I am incapable, to-morrow I shall be strong; to-night I lay my aching head on my pillow, to-morrow I awake, repeating—

"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day."

Now by comparing the two passages from the Psalms which I have read, you will see that David supplies his own want, answers his own prayer. The same deep heart that breathed the sigh—

"Oh that I might flee away and be at rest!"

shows us where rest is to be found without dove-

wings, and without flying away from our work. "Rest," said David, "in the Lord." As the ministration of Sleep is to the worn-out body, so is Rest in the Lord to the wearied and over-wrought spirit.

But the attainment of this rest? the secret of its possession? Teach us how this is to be found! is the cry of every heart. That those hidden processes of life which God has seen fit to conceal can never be made plain to us, I am thoroughly persuaded. Nevertheless, of the spiritual life, as of the natural, glimpses may be gained; let us, then, briefly consider for a few moments, how to find Rest in the Lord.

I repeat what I have already said, that with the highest things as with the lowest, Use is the condition of Brightness.

The idea of God is too much associated with times and seasons, too little connected with our daily life and our hourly feelings, to retain that brightness which it once possessed. Our theories about God's Essence, of which we can know nothing, our parcelling His nature out into attributes, have been fatal to vital faith. God has ceased to be to us the intensely personal Being He was to the Jews of old; He has subsided into a Force, a Law, an assemblage of attributes.

Now from all philosophizing about God, let us pray to be delivered; it removes Him far from us; it prevents our feeling His presence. What God essentially is, we shall never know in this world; what He is pleased to become towards us, is all that we require to know. That glorious Old Testament, with an anthropomorphism in which I delight, is nowhere afraid to speak of God as a Person. As a Person He has been pleased to reveal Himself to us; hence human relationships and human affections furnish the standard which should regulate our feelings towards God.

The great mistake of modern Christianity has been the substitution of Light for Heat, and nowhere is this more evident than in the doctrines it has taught concerning God. In its eagerness to be enlightened it has become icy; and the attempt to make the head correct has too often left the heart cold. But I say, accuracy is far less important than energy; that idea of God is best for me which vitalizes me most. Doctrines which furnish the head, but leave the heart in empty barrenness; abstractions that substitute words for feelings, and knowledge for life; teachings about God, instead of visions of God; these have been the greatest hindrances of vital religion. Hence I fearlessly

teach the child to believe that God is as completely a person as the father against whose bosom he is pressed; and I as fearlessly teach the man who can only be warmed by thinking of God under human form, to cherish the thought and abide in it.

The doctrine of the unchangeableness of God, great as its power is on the one hand to bless us, has, I think, been on the other hand the means of removing Him to a distance from us. That God cannot know change in Himself we all believe; but that towards us He does change, showing Himself "meek to the meek, and froward to the froward," the Scriptures everywhere insist. What is the meaning of all those outward revelations of God, which change continually, adapting themselves to the changing requirements of those to whom they are made? When God is to guide His people, He is by day a pillar of cloud, giver of shelter and shade; by night, a pillar of fire, giver of light and heat. Go through that precious chronicle of the inward life, the Psalms of David, and see how God continually becomes that which David at the moment requires. Is he in danger? then God is his rock and fortress and deliverer. In triumph? then He is his joy. In sorrow? his comforter.

This unchangeableness of God is a truth of the intellect which should never be suffered to usurp dominion over the heart. There be many truths recognized by the intellect which practical life refuses to acknowledge; and God, Who hath so fashioned our lives, sees fit that this discrepancy should exist.

It has long been mathematically proved, that the earth on which we dwell moves with a rapidity beyond description. You and I, though not scientific men, are fully persuaded of this; but I ask whether, while we know we move, we do not actually feel as if we stood still?

Just so it is with God's unchangeableness. In my head this doctrine rules, but not in my heart. I *know* He cannot know change; I *feel* He changes. Yes, when duty has to be done, God sits before me, like some stern and severe father whose tasks must be fulfilled; when my heart bleeds and my soul faints in sorrow, then He is gentle and loving, carrying the little ones in His bosom, and gently leading those that are with young. To feel God in the heart rather than to know Him in the intellect, and to feel that He changes with our wants and accommodates Himself to our necessities, are two ways by which some of the

rust may be rubbed off the precious gold of God's image, and the superscription once more be made legible.

But there are yet other ways of Resting in the Lord. One is, to believe that there is order where we see only confusion; justice where there appears to us inequality; symmetry and perfection where we see deformity and ugliness. Nor is this impossible. All nature supplies analogies which justify us in asserting that for the present we are in no condition to judge the works of God as a whole. What are we in this world of God's? So small a part of the great whole, and so placed within the whole, that we can never see more than a portion at a time. The orange appears to the child smooth and level, till the microscope reveals on its surface peaks of Alpine height. The circle may be so mighty, that to the dweller on the circumference, that portion of it which is visible on either side shall appear to be a right line. To you, dweller on the circumference of this world of God's, the curve becomes a right line; regarded from the heavens, its perfection as a circle is visible.

Go you up close to the works of some of our great painters, and see what a chaotic assemblage of colours they appear. Then retire to the proper

distance, contemplate them from thence, and see the perfection that is evolved out of chaos. Life has its point of view as well as Art; God, the great painter, contemplates His pictures from His own standing-point, not from ours; but He does not require from us more than that we should work on and "wait," and "Rest" in Him.

The feeling which makes us believe that the artist is right, before we have proved him so, which makes us content to wait until we have found his point of view, is what we all want in religion. We do feel this faith in one another: is it so impossible that we should extend it towards God? Practically to bear in mind that there always is a point from which His work will seem perfect, is one of the secrets of Resting in the Lord; and when I see men everywhere exercising this faith in the matters of this life, continually placing this trust in one another, I sigh for the voice of an angel to stir up spiritual faith in like manner, and make men believe in God, as they believe in their wisest and dearest friends.

The mason chipping away in the corner at his particular stone, or putting the last touches to the crocket confided to his care, is troubled with no restless desires to see the plan of the building.

Sufficient for him that there is a plan, and there is an architect by whom it is drawn. For the finishing of his little crocket, for the perfection of his particular stone, he knows himself answerable, and for nothing more. The placing and bestowal of these, their incorporation into the building, he finds ready to his hand by the will of the master by whom his work was assigned. Were we thorough believers in God, were we men of true faith, it were as easy for us to work on hopefully in the midst of apparent confusion, as for the mason to toil on at his little corner of the building, regardless of the disorder and noise around him.

You will say, "But it is so hard to work in the dark." Hard, I grant, but not impossible. You know that often in some of those refined ways of wasting time called "fancy needlework," a pattern gets divided into many little squares, all separately worked, and all, perhaps, entrusted to different sets of fingers. Each square is completed in full faith; for the arrangement of the whole was made by one in whom faith can be placed, and to whom the charge of such arrangement is confided. Now, to liken, as I am fond of doing, little things to great. Every commandment I know, every good desire I feel, is another little square given me to fill up. If

I fill up each rightly, the whole will be right; and I have but, as it were, to copy the pattern piece by piece, to secure perfection as to the result. True that on the wrong side unseemly knots and joins will be visible; but this is the earthly aspect, not the divine.

Talk of working in faith as impossible! Why, there is a kind of tapestry, the very condition of which is working in the dark. The workman stands at the back, and he works on the underside; he works without even asking to see. Why cannot we do the same in our lives?

Take yet another illustration. Christ, the Apostle tells us, is "the Captain of our salvation." How much does the private soldier, on entering the battle-field, know beyond this, that he goes there to fight? Is it necessary, that he may consent to do this, to show him the plan of the campaign? No; to plan belongs to the General; to fight is his vocation. But were there no general, and no plan, there were no fighting got from the soldier.

Now I am not treating you to a string of similes for purposes of amusement. I am setting before you the various aspects under which life presents itself to me.

God is the great Architect, who plans the

building, assigns us our different corners to work in, and Himself places the keystone when the edifice is reared. God is the Designer of the tapestry, who stands, as it were, on the right side, and out of our stitches made in the dark, calls a beautiful pattern forth. God is the Captain under whose banners we enlist, and who will arrange the plan of the battle and secure victory on our side, so we fight but bravely where He sets us down.

One other secret of Resting in the Lord is this. To believe that our course, though a devious one, is towards a fixed point. It were as absurd to say, because a vessel sailing against the wind makes repeated tacks, that she is destined for no port, as to imagine that because our course in life is devious, therefore its goal is not fixed. The tackings of the vessel are not its destination; the wanderings of life are not its end.

And another way to "Rest in the Lord," is to feel Him always near; to say with David, "Thou dost beset me behind and before."

We are told of the "mesmeric eye" that is to effect a reformation in morals; and asked how we shall feel when we know that a friend at a distance is watching our evil deeds. Exquisite folly! Will you get men to quail before the possible human

eye, when they fear not the Divine eye, the eye that never slumbers nor sleeps?

No, the old doctrine is the vital one, and fresh life must be infused into it. It is in the power of each of us to make the thought of God as vital to us, as is the mother's face seen by the child on waking from a troubled slumber. There is the mother, so all must be well; the head drops upon the pillow, and the little one sinks down calmly to rest. We can fancy how those French soldiers of Napoleon slept, knowing their General would visit them sleeping, and would watch while they slumbered.

Again, I say, these are no mere similes; the cases are the same; if you draw a line between the two, you make a fatal mistake. To believe in God as the infant believes in its mother, the soldier in his general, this is the secret of Resting in the Lord.

When this point has been gained, how easy life becomes! The last height of the Christian hill has been climbed, and the believer dwells in a region of perpetual peace. When we can turn from Man to God; when we can appeal from the earthly to the heavenly Cæsar; when, misunderstood, we can say, though Man scorn me, God accepts; when

we can appeal to God's omniscience as did the Apostle, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee," the last victory is gained, and the soul rests in perfect peace, being stayed upon God.

The last and surest mode of Resting in the Lord, is to rest in Him through Christ. Every day I live, I become increasingly less Theist, more Christian. God is high above us, He cannot always be brought near; hence Christ came down and dwelt among us. To me, Christ is to the soul what a guide through the difficult country is to the traveller. He not merely supplies map and road-book, but himself goes before and leaves his foot-prints for our guidance. What the sight of footprints on the snowy Alps is to the lonely wanderer, that does the life of the Lord Christ become to me. No danger or peril, no suffering or sorrow, through which he has not passed before me; and I know, however narrow and difficult the path, there is an issue beyond.

There are mountain passes so dangerous, that it is only by putting one foot into the hand of the guide, that we can be safely carried through them. If the guide be trustworthy, if we know that he is familiar with every turn of the road, and

has already led many in safety over it, we hesitate not to encounter the difficulties of the way. Again, what men are capable of in daily life, they are capable of in religion. Trust Him who is "the way" as you trust an earthly guide, and He will lead you safely through all earthly perils, and through the last dark pass of the grave into the regions of everlasting glory.

One caution in conclusion. The "rest in the Lord" of which David speaks, must be a rest of calmness, not of insensibility. Not to suffer, because we do not feel, is the most unenviable of all spiritual conditions. As Christ refused the wine mingled with myrrh, that he might retain his consciousness to the last, so would I reject everything that would dull and cloud my perceptions. Not the deadened nerve be mine, but the tremblingly alive; not the insensible, but the quickly-moved heart; yet calm, with a "brave sad valour," ready to bear, ready to forbear, ready to endure, with the "Hope that maketh not ashamed"—for

"They that endure unto the end shall be saved."

"DOING GOOD."

"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good."—ACTS x. 38.

THERE is no power that any of you have, by which you can contrive to love that in God which it would be impossible for you to love in Man.

Therefore it behoves teachers to be exceedingly careful what they declare God to be. I have parted company with the God of my youth,—by which I mean, the God that I was taught to believe to be the true and living God,—and I have been the better for the parting. Many of us have done the same thing, and the truth about Him has since been slowly and painfully brought into our view. We have found that we were right in some matters, but evidently wrong in others; that the average good man was a great deal better than the Supreme Being, as represented to us by our

teachers. Those were evil times for the soul, till it got deliverance, and came to see that what it had believed in was merely the wrecks and rags of paganism, though called Religion.

Then the soul grew brave enough to keep its own counsel, to hold to its own principles, and have its own theology, interpreting the evangelists for itself, and differing from the apostles if it was found impossible to agree with them.

This is the point to which many of us have come: not to receive as infallible everything we have been taught, but to endeavour to learn what we can through the Word and Works of God, so that He shall command our supreme veneration, and at the same time our deep and tender-hearted love.

There is one aspect of the divine character which is seldom dwelt upon as it should be, which every man should rejoice in more than in any other,—and that is the bountiful Loving-kindness of God.

I say this advisedly, I am much dissatisfied with very much of what is given to the world as Religion, for it has lacked this element: it has lacked the Giving of Joy as the conclusion of the matter. It has dwelt too much on "sin brought into the

world," and the supposed "degeneracy of our race," while it has lacked the consolation and joy of the Tender Mercies of God, which "are over all His works." He shows unto men His tender mercy, that which is nearest to Himself, His most bountiful compassion. His first object is to make them good, to make them happy in doing good unto others, thus fulfilling the law of life.

Such is the almightiness of God, that while He is ever giving He never wants; though ever ready to bestow, He never needs. In the person of His Son we find the same thing repeated under earthly conditions—

"He went about doing good."

We find this the great characteristic of his life, that he was tempted in early life, and that having gathered up the experience of that life in its contest with wrong-doing and sin, he afterwards spent the whole force of his nature in daily life—he spent it all—upon doing good.

Now there is one aspect of this bountiful blessed "doing of good," to which I want to call your thoughts.

There are changes that come upon every man, from the morning even to the evening which inevitably succeeds, (for there must be a setting if

there has been a rising). There are what may be called morning, noontide, afternoon, and evening in every man's life, if he live the natural term of years.

Now there is very much of sickly and sentimental talk about the pleasures of life, as if they all ought to remain pleasures to the end. Who ever expected that they could, with our bodies so imperfect as they are? It is as ridiculous as it would be for a child who was allowed to use a knife and fork, to fret after his baby-spoon. There is a time for everything under the sun. The infant man has no teeth, and in old age he has no teeth again. As it began so it ends. There should be no need to point out these things: it is part of the natural history of man's life.

Watch the child—his peculiarity is to want much, constantly to be asking; his glory is to be always getting. For a child in easy circumstances is a sight to behold. He always seems to be asking questions and demanding new things. He acts as a universal tax-gatherer. It is unnecessary to talk to him of "rendering unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." The little child knows that he is Cæsar, and that everything is to be rendered to him that he wants. Now that is the glory of childhood,

and quite right too. For see what a large shop he will have to stock; how he will have to grow; therefore the child is constantly asking, requiring, levying taxes, collecting rates, in order that he may build up his body, and get it well stocked for the battle of life.

But grown men cry out peevishly about what they have lost; how they do not care now for things, and wish that they were younger! Nay, "Everything," Solomon says, "is set over against the other;" there is a time to work, as there is a time to play; and as there is a time when the rate-payer is unwilling to give, so it is necessary to put a limit upon the powers of the tax-layer. By degrees, therefore, the child's wonderful power of incessant demand ceases. It is of no use to complain. There are pleasures and passions which are the accompaniments and part of the functions of youth. And what is more natural? what is more necessary?

But people should not complain when the time comes for them to have done with this, that, and the other wish and pleasure, which die out as soon as the needs are done with. The want having perished, the fineness of desire ceases; and it is natural. There are no pleasures that are intended

to last green all through life, except one. Why be disappointed then, if spared for thirty years, that the power to enjoy what you liked when you were a child is gone?

It is mere sentimentality to talk about the fading pleasures of life. Of course one feels pleasure in gathering a bunch of flowers and seeing the great Author in them. But they soon die; and very proper that they should do so. So it is with all the youthful desires of our life; after they have fulfilled their purpose they pass away, and it is useless to try and retain them.

Again—there are those who value beauty and the advantages of wealth, and speak of the sadness of being obliged to give them up as the infirmities of years steal over them. These are some of the miseries and wretchednesses which to me are utterly unintelligible, with which I have no sympathy, and which I am unable to fathom.

Others are wanted in our places. I have no patience with those who always want to be young, who want to be first when the fiddling sounds for the young people to dance. If you stay in the place, you are simply to be regarded as the half-drowned fly on the window in autumn, which will not die decently when the rest of its brethren are gone.

Why should a man's hunger continue after he has fed? After wealth, fame, and social pleasures have had their little day, it is of no use wishing to keep them in their fulness and largeness; the passions and the desires are quenched. These things are said to be very pathetic. No doubt they are, if not looked at as necessary and natural, and as leading on to better things.

Still, is it not wiser not to whine over them, but to let them go as gracefully as possible, while we slip towards the west? and to get as much as we can of the joy of doing our duty, when we are nearing a better and nobler state of being?

All earthly pleasures grow less and less, except one.

Some of them are exceedingly pleasant. It is a scandalous thing for a man, having had his fill of them, to turn round and abuse them; having quaffed the draught, to set the cup down and say it is very flat. Was it flat when your lips first kissed the cup? Nay! Having had enough, not being able to drink any more, you put it down blaspheming, and you reproach what you are no longer capable of enjoying.

I have had many pleasures; many of them I have done with, but some of them I like still, and

intend to continue them as long as possible. And I find one occupation which is ever green, of which we shall never weary, which is good for all seasons, beautiful at all times, a source of unwearying delight which comes nearest to the divine, and that is—the act of Doing Good.

This is the one pleasure which will surely increase as life goes on.

Of course we absolve very young people from very much anxiety about doing good to others. I do not believe in very young philanthropists; I do not hold with some "goody" people who recommend children early to become Sisters of Mercy, "ministering angels," and then write, or get somebody to write and say they did it. Up to a certain time of life philanthropy is not the main thing. When I am at college, if I intend to be a good scholar, I have not time to run about on philanthropic objects; I have to get my Greek, to master mathematics, and to study as much as I can for that purpose. I shall spare nothing in order to accomplish this; it becomes the most important duty when the man has to be built up. But when he has done all he needs for the growth of his body, and achieved his learning, he can then do something for his kind; then he should become boun-

tiful, generous, able to "do good, and to communicate," to become a philanthropist.

This is a pleasure that he never can be weary of. However empty this world may seem to him, there is always a joy for him, in doing good to others. Even if he be afflicted with scepticism, he will feel it noble to share in the pleasure of that which is the most perpetual joy of the human mind.

I do not speak of any particular form of "doing good;" it is most comprehensive in its variety; although capable of the largest description of work, it takes in everything, from the lowest to the highest. We often find the spirit of helping others develop itself in a very simple manner—sometimes in stopping the lash from falling over the toil-worn beast; sometimes in binding up a broken flower, that it may live yet another day to God.

But beginning at the littlest things, it also ascends to the highest political aims. We do not mean doing good in a mere ecclesiastical sense,—in the way of giving tracts, attending chapel services, and psalm-singings,—but doing good as in the sight of the God whom we worship; doing good on the scale of God, that is, as far as the measure of our ability. In doing good, men will find infinite methods; from the giving of a cup of cold water,

even unto teaching the nations righteousness, and the governors to rule in justice.

There are no limits to this wonderful power; it brings all things into itself—it uses wealth and wisdom for the enjoyment of other people. It sings a simple song if anybody can be blest by it; it pleases the child by ministering to its gratification; whatsoever in the least tends to the enlargement of human happiness comes into the blessed pleasure of "doing good." The infinite forces of man can run into it, and the older he gets, provided there is no imbecility, the more he can do. All the gathered forces of life once spent in acquiring knowledge and power are pressed into the service. They have done their work of preparation, their full forces are now drawn into this one—the constant and varied pleasure of doing good.

We find even a man's mistakes come to his assistance. A man, as he grows older, does good not only from kindness, but does it with wisdom and discretion. Even his former blunders help him. Many a time have his good intentions been spoiled, for want of good methods; but now the whole story of his life is before him, to keep him in check, and he can be therefore good and wise, generous and discreet. Everything that he has

picked up, gathered, learned, suffered, every bitter experience—all go to assist in this eternal pleasure of his life; nothing is wasted, all go into this great treasury, and find themselves at home. It never decays; for being, I suppose, the divinest of all human powers, God has given to it something of His own immortality. Old as you may be, kindliness, human kindliness, is always in season, always bountiful and generous. I have seen many aged men whose life was a long pain, yet spending a good deal of their waning strength in looking cheerfully, in speaking cheerfully, in order that those about them might at least thank Heaven for finding them still with this sweet and gracious habit, this perennial pleasure—"doing good."

And as the methods of doing good are various, so are the means of doing it various. Some people think that doing good demands large means; but the true meaning of the word asks not largeness of means, but largeness of heart. Who shall blame the violet for not being the cedar of Lebanon? It were blasphemy to reproach the little daisy because it gives not the broad shade of the oak tree. Everything is beautiful in its season. The little flower opening one of its eyes to behold the light looks upon us from its own little point of life. It

does its work and pours out daily beauty after its own order, of which it is as full, as rejoicingly and as blessedly full, as the cedar of Lebanon, or the gnarled oaks of Old England.

All things are beautiful in their season; there is no limit to the infinite variety of their gracious Author, Who delights as much in little as in great things. We need care nothing for the shortness of the pleasure that we can give, we have nothing to do with calculations as to its results; but we have to see that it is infinite in variety, in method, and that it receives into it all the forces which have come from our past life—all experiences, all sweetnesses, and all sorrows. It may be described as the western glow before the night, a very gracious end to a life well spent.

You have read the history of our Lord's temptation. Of the miraculous side or part of it, I confess I understand very little; about the visit of a personal Satan, I know nothing; but the spiritual significance of the story can never be missed. Christ was tempted to such things as a human soul might be tempted by, and he overcame. No very wise man troubles himself about the fallibility, the peccability, of the nature of Christ. Wise men have said that the strangest phenomenon in the

history is the sinlessness of Christ. Whether or not he was peccable I cannot say, and, what is more, I don't care; but that he was without sin, that there was no sign of his falling, this is clear, and it is worth pondering over.

Of course some of you say his very sinlessness makes his example worthless. It is commonly said, "Prove the sinlessness of Christ, and it removes his human sympathy, and his example is also valueless; we can by no possibility follow it." But there you have made a marvellous mistake. There is the Perfect Man by whom the will of God is perfectly done; he is the perfection and consummation of humanity. If he should come out defective, immediately we should find nothing but exaggerations of his defects in our attempts at imitation, and we should get further and further into imperfection. Unless we have utter perfectness in our model, each defect will go on increasing perpetually. If Christ had had one single fault, his example would be without value to us; the fault would be exaggerated in an increasing ratio, instead of the perfection of humanity slowly progressing.

But the point I want you to look at in the story of the Temptation, is this: The forces which

Christ raised against temptation were gathered early in his life; and subsequently, while he was the holiest of men, he was yet the most pitying of souls, the most forgiving of spirits. All of you who do strive to live purely, wisely, and well, remember this, Jesus was both the just and the justifier. No man has mastered much of the theology of the Christian Religion, until he has seen how these two things are connected; that while he never sinned, he had yet the most tender spirit the world has ever known towards the sinner; while he was holy and always ready to obey, he was yet the most tolerant of the shortcomings of others.

He gathered all the forces of his life into himself, and he was thus enabled to be exceeding bountiful in his gifts to others. The whole power of the man being gathered into himself, he was enabled to give it out again in bounty and in blessing.

This is the reward which he holds out for the doing of good. The power of doing good, and the passionate desire to do good, increase with exercise. Hence we find that those who are the best themselves, do the most good. This makes middle life and old age so kindly, generous, and bountiful, when the man has begun to fight the good fight

early. If in his early days he struggles temperately and wisely, and fights with the temptations to sin, he will find afterwards a fulness of life in him by which he will be enabled to follow the example of him who "went about doing good."

Of all pleasures, I repeat, this is the one that never dies away; it is the one that lasts when the others have faded. What, after all, is our great object, but to confer the largest possible amount of happiness upon the greatest number. Though there may not be a spiritual sound about that phrase, the happiness of God and Man are, in the highest sense of it, identical, and a man could hardly set himself a better task than that he should confer the largest amount of blessings upon the largest number of people that he can.

Those of you who are young should remember this. If you begin early in life the habit of doing good, without calculation, without grudging, and with cheerfulness, you will find it your chiefest joy late in life. When friends get fewer; when the eyes of those you once knew are closed in death; when a man gets to be like a promontory, far out at sea, almost an island, solitary and unknown; when all is strange, and though there be the old familiar places, yet they are estranged because of

the absence of those who once haunted them, and you hear in them the voices of strange tongues; when the head grows grey, and the heart seems growing cold; when, as Solomon says, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity;" when the senses grow dim or cease, and the passions are but the ashes of extinct volcanoes; when the pleasures of this world have been exhausted (even wisely exhausted, perhaps); when this world can do no more than let a man alone; when the grave is before us; when Time's chariot-wheels can be heard coming on to take us to God; then—then, in the doing of good and in trying to make others happy, you will still find that the battle of life can be made glorious. In giving up yourselves to this highest of duties, you will find that it is green and lovely to the end; Divine in its beginnings, it is beautiful in its endings; a treasure which knows no dimness when wealth has become rusty, and all things built upon it have perished and passed away; a foretaste of Heaven given by God Himself.

"*THEIR EYES WERE HOLDEN.*"

"But their eyes were holden, that they should not know him."—LUKE xxiv. 16.

THAT the disciples should not know their master, seems strange; that lovers should not know their love, seems impossible; that the child should forget the mother who bore him, seems out of the question. And yet, written in these gospels, we have the story of Christ being unknown to his disciples, hidden from the eyes of his lovers, not seen by those he called his children. She who loved him chiefly, saw Jesus standing by, and took him for the gardener. Again Jesus stood on the shore, but his disciples knew not that it was he. And here were these two men, walking towards the village of Emmaus, and Jesus himself drew near, and went with them; and as they walked, they talked and questioned concerning him, "but their

eyes were holden, that they should not know him."

Now, as touching the outward circumstances of these records, I know no more than you do, and that is nothing.

But this "holding of the eyes" is no miracle, nor a part of anything marvellous, but something that is common to us all; a phenomenon of nature so common and so constant that it is worth while to look at what it is that holds men's eyes so that they see not, and their ears so that they cannot hear; for of the majority of people it is true that,

"Having eyes, they see not, and having ears, they hear not."

Passing through this same world, there are some who see nothing but barrenness, while others, with more open-eyed and open-hearted souls, find no place in this world that is forgotten by God, no circumstance which they cannot bring to His praise.

It was not by what men call magic; not by the Spirit, in any mystical sense of the word, that these men's eyes were holden; yet how came they to be so?

There was no change in the Master, as far as the story goes. They ought to have known him. He said unto them, "Behold my hands, my side, my feet." He asked them, "Children, have ye any

meat?" and he ate with them. No, there was no change in him; the whole mystery was in them; "their eyes were holden, that they should not know him."

A fine old phrase, that;—"their eyes were holden."

There was something that held their eyes, so that they should not see what they did see. The eyes of those two men were wide open with eagerness and questioning, and yet they knew not the Lord.

He stood before Mary in the garden; her eyes were wide open with anxiety and bewilderment, but she knew not that it was Jesus.

Peter's eyes were all agaze to see who it was that came to them there on the shore, and put that inquiry, "Children, have ye any meat?" Yet he knew not that it was Jesus.

These eager-eyed, questioning, longing, wondering people were not blindfolded, yet their eyes were holden by something; the lids were up, yet there was a curtain there.

Leaving these stories of the Scriptures, let us come to things closer to ourselves and our own day. Let us examine what it is that causes men now to have their eyes open, yet not to see; what it is that makes us so often not know when there is

a blessing close to us; to have an angel in the house, and let him go out of it again, as completely a stranger as before he entered it. We could not see the angel by reason of our ignorance, our prejudice, our pre-occupation, our want of hope, faith, and belief; so that the passing messenger has left the house, and God's angel was not recognized, because our "eyes were holden, that we could not see."

Now these are the curtains that prevent men from seeing what is to be seen in this world. Ignorance is one of the first and chief. It is wonderful to see some men walking through this wondrous world. To the man whose eyes are opened, its beauty is awful; another man sees it not. In one man, a flower by the roadside will move "thoughts too deep for tears;" another man will laugh such things to scorn. To one man,

> "The primrose by the river's brim
> A yellow primrose was to him,
> And it was nothing more."

But, to the open-eyed, the meanest flower that blows is a source of instruction and joy. What thoughts the lily stirred in Christ! Gazing at its simple beauty, he drew from it eternal consolation. To him, not a sparrow flew over his path, but

he drew from it a lesson of God's goodness and care.

"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

Is it right to the God who made us, and who gave us this house to live in, and decked it with such glorious things,—is it right for us to go about not caring what He has done for us? The majority of people walk across this world with eyes holden, that they see not. If they see a stone, they see that it *is* a stone, and that is all they know about it. But to the educated man, the man who has a passion for knowledge, that stone tells tales of creatures that lived before Adam, and reveals a whole world's history. Those creatures of yesterday have written their own epitaph in that stone; but only the open-eyed man can read. To him, as he looks upon a tree, is visible not only its bark and wood and leaves, but the mounting sap, the circulating blood, the beating pulse of its life. All things are transparent to him whose eyes are not holden. That man knows that there are always two worlds to be seen. By the outward, he comes to know the inward. To the anatomist the human body is a revelation; he knows the hidden marvels

by what is shown of outward form. But to some people the human body is beautiful only till you take the skin off; then it is foul and terrible.

Passing from these things, which will, perhaps, interest some of you but little, we find the same thing in character. To him whose eyes are not holden, no man or woman is uninteresting, no child but has its charms; even in their uglinesses he finds varieties, which he contrasts and compares. No man passes by who does not teach him something.

The man with opened eyes, if he be a thoughtful man, has this privilege, that from what other folks reject, he gains pleasure, or, at any rate, knowledge. If a man's manners are not just to your mind, it is hard for some of you to feel any interest in him. "I don't like that man's manners; his voice is harsh." "And that woman, she does not come from a good set." O fools, and blind! What does a wise man care for such miserable bondage? Clear through all that, he can see what of God is there—the large heart and the true nature. Through that beggar's garb is disclosed the monarch; through Cinderella's rags is seen the fair foot which alone the golden slipper will fit.

Never throw away man, woman, or child, until

you have proved them to be worthless. Be not a Pharisee, fearing lest any one should pass in who is not exactly of your set. I do declare that I have not seen a man, woman, or child, out of whom I could not get amusement, if not instruction. Under most things, divinity may be found; and he who knows not man, can know little of God. He has most joy in life who is the largest-hearted, and has the most open eyes; who sees the inner man first, before he takes account of the poor outward garb. There are some of you who do with a stranger as you do when you get a letter sometimes; you look at the post-mark, examine the direction, and turn it round, and get prejudiced; by the time you get to the inside, you have lost all clear sense for what may be there.

One of the most wonderful holders of the eyes is Prejudice. It takes a strong man to free himself from it. There are some who are always going about discussing other people's characters. These characters, that you hear of, are not much worth trusting to. It is impossible that you can ever afterwards learn to know the person truly, especially if a bad character is given, unless you are a very generous man. It is wonderful how easily some people are prejudiced against others. They

get a hint or two, and that is enough. "So-and-so is coming this evening. He is an excellent man, but——" "She is a lovely woman, but——" Can you ever see that loveliness as it is, or know that man as he is, after that? No, for your eyes are holden, and you cannot see. Prejudice is thus one of the greatest holders of the eyes. "How can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" This came out of Nazareth. Well, it is impossible for any good thing to come out of Nazareth, no good thing ever did come out of Nazareth; so it is not a good thing, that is clear.

It is pitiful to see how these prejudices and little hints and objections prevent the truth from being seen. If a person wants to injure another, he has only to get up a story about him before you see him. "He does not squint exactly, but he has got a cast in his eye;" and in the course of repetition this will constitute infinite ugliness.

But why should you dislike people, just because they don't come up to your white-washed standard of small moralities? Remember that everlastingly beautiful tale in the gospel, when Christ was asked if he knew what sort of woman that was who was touching his feet. The man who put that question was a very respectable man, no doubt, and a very

good man too, but it was after a hard pattern of goodness, an unloving, ungenerous goodness. He never knew what it was to dip the sinner into the waters of charity, and bring him out lovely and pure. Christ did; the young man at the top of the table did not. He whose eyes were holden—what did he see? A sinner. But the Lord's eyes, being opened by the divineness of charity, saw through that sad woman's stained nature, and saw the waters of love and goodness coursing underneath, the eternal spring of faith and trust. The one man's eyes saw only a block, misshapen—a stone spoiled; the eyes that were opened by love saw in that strange-looking block a very angel of God, which the great Sculptor's hand should one day make visible, when she too should take her part in the eternal choir, and sing her song—

"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake."

Here we see in part, and know in part; but when we live in the clear air of loving-kindness, then we shall know even as we are known.

Thus Prejudice of an evil kind causes the eyes to be holden. But Pre-occupation of another kind holds them too. When we are so full of our thought of what a thing *was*, we cannot see it as

it *is*. It is possible not to know our friend because we are thinking of him as he was. The disciples of Jesus were so full of yesterday, that they could not see to-day; they were so taken up with the crucifixion and their disappointment, that they did not see the risen Christ. They looked at Christ and saw him not, because their eyes were holden with the memory of their despair. Therefore, whether the Pre-occupation is one to be condemned or to be praised, it is nevertheless a holding of the eyes, preventing us from seeing the exact thing that is before us.

Again, how often the Visible holds the eyes, so that the Invisible is not seen through it! It is marvellous to see people speculating about likenesses in families. You will hear them say, "I cannot see any likeness in that child to his father." But what deceives them is that their eyes are holden, by being fixed too much upon one particular part. They will say sometimes, "That woman is not like her brother; her eyes are blue, while his are brown." That is all they see. Their eyes are constantly fixed upon some particular outward sign, and they know not the spirit. Do you know where to look for likeness? It is not in the colour of the cheek, or hair, or eyes, but in the

look of the soul as it looks out of the eye. That tells the true likeness. So it is with character. Two people, very unlike in nature, may be as like as can be outwardly; and with most people the mind sees no difference, because the eye sees the outward likeness; one or two little points draw all attention, because they are visible to the eye, and the truer and greater differences that are within are not seen at all; the mind is pre-occupied.

For him who is coming across the mountains, sore-footed and weary, there is but one thing to be seen,—his home in the inn. He knows that there a bright fire awaits him and something to eat; there he may shake off his dripping garments, and stretch out his hands before the fire, and rest his wearied limbs. What to him are the toilsome hills and the stormy sky? his gaze is fixed upon one point,—his home in the inn.

One of the sweetest holding of the eyes is that which comes of large love. Did you ever know what it was to be in a room full of people, and only to see one person? to have an undefined sense of a babble around you, a distant sense of company? to have your eyes wide open among many people, and yet to see but one, one only? The glorious privilege of love, is that it so monopolizes the

mind and enraptures the soul, that the eyes are holden, and people don't see one another as they are.

Nay, men have done great deeds in this world, because their eyes were holden.

What did John Howard see in his travels throughout Europe? Picturesque scenery? No! filth, filth! stench, stench! He saw but one thing, —the poor prisoner. His eyes were not holden in that respect, but, ever gazing through those thick prison walls to the poor wretch who lay within, he sought to bring him back to life and hope.

These are sweet holdings of the eyes, and they are lovely to see. So the mother finds her own babe out of a thousand, and out of a Babel of noises and a chorus of cries, she can detect the cry of her own little one.

There have been men so enraptured by heavenly visions, so taken up with God and the spiritual world, that this world has gradually become to them but a poor thin veil before the light of it; and they have suffered and toiled and died in the intensity of their feeling.

But should not the love that the disciples bore to him have shown the Lord to them? Nay! Whoso loses his love, expects, when he sees it again,

to see it as it was, and forgets that even he himself is not what he was. You know it is said of exiles that they forget nothing and they learn nothing. When they go back to their native land, they expect to see it as it was. There is nothing more pathetic than to see a poor Italian going back to his lovely land. His eyes are open; he sees; but he sees yesterday. To-day is tame to him, because he will have it that it ought to be as yesterday.

These pre-occupations are all pardonable, but they ought to be guarded against. We must be careful that the passionate love which unites us to yesterday, shall not hide from us the change that is coming over the things of to-day; that we be not blind to the things of to-day, because our gaze is fixed on yesterday. For there is a gazing on the past which is like gazing on the sun, so that the things between go out of sight. We look sorrowfully back upon yesterday, and the tears for the past hold the eyes all too sadly. Yesterday makes more tracks of tears than to-day brings lines of glory. We think more of yesterday's loss than of to-day's gain. The one great unthankfulness of man is that he forgets so much that he has, in thinking of that which he has had, and has lost.

I have watched many holdings of the eyes, and

one of the worst is the want of expectancy, the want of faith. Some people hope for so little. Oh, the dreary life that some do lead! They let house-keeping eat out heart-keeping, and there is no music in the soul from one week's end to another. Expecting nothing, they see nothing. But to the seeking, grasping soul, determined to fill both hands, determined that God shall be liberal,—to him much is given. He says, "Before I go, I have threescore years and ten in which to try the fruits, and see the sights, and hear the sounds of this fair world; and then I will let them go their way." He wants much, needs much, asks much, and will have much; therefore his eyes are not holden. He who asks much, has much. It is because your little desires are so respectably small, that your eyes are holden; but the man who is determined to have much, wins it. Watch children; see how they are determined to get what they can—their hands are stretched out continually. What opening of eyes there is with them! And the little child gets more pleasure out of life than he will when he is older. A scooped turnip gives more pleasure to a child than any of your filthy lucre can give the man in after life. Eager, longing, determined, the child grasps all he can get.

Perhaps your humility makes you boast that you have very few wants and desires. I would not have my wants so disturb me as to prevent my having peace, doing my work, and being still; but it is a good thing to have a great many wants and large desires. I would have infinite wants and desires, for they who have the largest desires, have the most open eyes and unstopped ears.

Remember, lastly, it is the want of power to pierce through the Visible to the Invisible that makes our eyes to be holden by Death. Have you ever known what it is to look across the desolate night of sorrow and bereavement, seeing nothing? Have you cried out—

"I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh"?

That is how the hungry, longing, bereaved spirit always feels,—"I may see it, but not now; in the far-off future only." When God's angel comes with his dusky wings, and gathers away all too soon some that we love, and takes them through the portal of death, it is because our eyes are holden that we do not see him to be God's messenger. Death is the bell of evening, telling the over-tired labourer that it is time to go home. The wise man, whose eyes are open, says—

"I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh."

To that man, whose eyes are not holden, through the darkening form of Death, the Lord of life is visible; through the closed gate of the grave he beholds the opening gate of heaven. To that man, though Death wear a sombre garb, yet it hides not the wings of the Angel. To him, Death is lovely, for he has mastered its secret. Once in death there was a sting—that sting was sin; but the delivered soul, the forgiven heart, sees that sting taken away, and death is no longer to be feared.

Now, ponder upon these things—for they are worth pondering upon—at your leisure. If there is anything in this world that to you is inexplicable, and you cannot see the end to which it leads,—go and watch some great sculptor at his work. I have watched great artists paint, and I have watched them use the chisel, and upon that rough brown canvas, or out of that ill-shapen block, I have seen slowly come forth a lovely sleeping angel, the image of the little babe that went to God so soon. Into that rude block the artist looks, and sees what is lying hidden there; and, by his genius, out of that stone he is able to raise up children unto Abraham. So, may not God, out of seeming

deadness, raise men up unto glory and beauty and grace?

Therefore, get rid of ignorance, prejudice, and pharisaism. Give them a hearty kick out of heart and house. If you are filled with prejudice, though Christ Himself should walk with you, you would not know Him. The larger your faith and hope and desire, the more you are determined to see of goodness, the more you will see; for it is there, in all things, and in everybody, and it only needs the seeing eye and the open heart to behold it.

In bringing up your child, be careful to do this —never let him put anything out of his hand without seeing the old life of which it is telling, or the new life to which it is leading. Show him that the real glory of the Spring-time is this;—not only that it is lovely in itself, but that it contains within it the bloom of Summer, and the golden hues of the glorious harvest of Autumn. Twilight has the greatest charm, because we know it will lead on to the solemn night, which shall surely be followed by the dawn, leading on unto the perfect day. The pathetic beauty of childhood to a loving-hearted man is in this on-leading; and if he drops a tear, it is because he is thinking of the infinitely pathetic loveliness of what is to come. In that little

lassie, he sees the future mother, and thinks of the day when she, too, shall rejoice that a man-child is born into the world. If men would but see more of the future in the present, and mark the harvest in the bud, then life would be more beauteous to them than it is. It has been said of death that it is like a jewel shining in the dark. Only in the dark does it become a shining thing.

Now, in educating your child, make him to have a seeing eye. Let the father pick up a pebble and become eloquent upon it; let the mother take up a leaf, and explain the glories of it. Look round your house this afternoon, with your eyes opened. See in the children around you, the Angels that are to be. Learn to see in Peter the fisherman,—Peter the Apostle; to see in Peter, naked, stained with the scales of the fishes he had caught;—him who was to receive the keys of the kingdom of heaven, whose name was to be the rock upon which Christ's Church should be founded. They whose eyes were holden, asked concerning Christ, "Is not this the carpenter's son, whose brothers and sisters live in our village?" but those whose eyes were opened, and whose ears were unstopped, declared that "never man spake like this man." Thus, when the eyes are opened, the dull, vulgar child becomes

a hero or a saint; and, if he be neither loveable nor loving, yet remember that in that block an angel may be sleeping. The Lord Christ, looking at Zaccheus in the sycamore tree, saw the passionate spirit that needed but one touch of God's forgiveness to fit it to enter for ever the kingdom of heaven.

Strive, then, to have large, wide, desirous eyes, and ears that stand well open, large wants that look for largeness of blessing, then shall you be filled. Pray God that you may never be pinched or narrow in heart.

"O Lord, enlarge my heart; for then shall I behold wondrous things out of thy law."

They who are taken up with themselves, are forbidden to see anything but themselves. The proud and haughty make but poor travellers. Therefore let no film of ignorance, no mist of prejudice or arrogance, obstruct your vision. The only thing that should be allowed to hold the eyes is when the necessities of enthusiasm, or the sweet, grand passion of love, make it impossible for us to see more than one thing at a time. And even this can only last for a time, for this glorious burst of morning passion is fated finally to pass into the sweeter, more tranquil and lovely evening light of the Eternal Rest.

"THE BEAUTY OF THE LORD."

"Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us."—
PSALM XC. 17.

THE worth of words is much determined by the mouth from which they come, and the beauty of words is much determined by the circumstances under which they are uttered.

For the sweetest words may be turned into sing-song, and the loveliest phrases may ring hollow with untruth; the impropriety of the place, or the unseemliness of the hour, may destroy the meaning of any utterance. The words of wise men are lovely, because the men were wise and their words were uttered in season; for season has much to do with determining the worth of anything. Who, in the cold of winter, should offer summer fruits, would find small sale for them; and who, in the heat of summer, should carry fur goods, would be treated as a fool.

Now, there is no more extraordinary prayer than this, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." And, to these words, what different meanings may be attached, according to whose mouth it is that utters them!

Uttered by some poor savage, they would have sounded strangely; for the savage has a beauty of his own greater than that of the fancied god he worships, in that he is human.

Had the Greek poured out that prayer, he might have thought it possible soon to realize it; for there were men of Greece who might have stood for Apollo's portrait.

Had the cry been raised to such gods as many men have worshipped, we should fail to see the meaning of the prayer. And even if you utter it to the God whom the usual Englishman worships,—a God who is vengeful, and who condemns men to endless punishment,—it has no meaning for me.

But when, in the midst of cumbrous laws, we hear them summed up in these two—

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself;"

when we hear it preached that

"Mercy is better than sacrifice"—

then these words gather meaning.

Prayer borrows meaning from the heart of him that utters it, and this prayer was made lovely by the loveliness of the Lord to whom Moses prayed. Words gain beauty by seasonableness, and lack loveliness by unseasonableness.

So eternally true, so constantly human is this Psalm, that there are few graves opened in this land but those words are uttered—

"Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations."

Let us look at the circumstances under which those words were first uttered. Think of that great man out there in the desert, day after day, moving on; as he thinks of the tents he is looking at, which are never pitched two nights in the same place, he turns to God, and says, "Thou hast been our dwelling-place;" fixed, eternal, constant, sure. Looking towards the restless, tossing sea, and finding nothing to rest upon among the black waters, he says—

"Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations."

Looking to the mountains, he says—

"Before they were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."

Looking at this little tossing sea called "human life," he says, "From everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God." Then he measures the shortness of life. Sitting down there, sad-hearted, thinking of the friends, the lovers, the excellent, the true-hearted companions, that have passed away, he cries, "Where are they?" And, thinking of those that have lost the light of their eyes and the desire of their heart, he turns piteously to wail to God. There, sitting in his lonely tent, he says—

"The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow."

Thus having humbled himself, or rather being humbled by that which he thought upon, he throws himself upon God, stripping himself, like the Turk, who leaves his shoes outside when he goes to worship. Bare feet suit him there, for they tell the tale of bareness of soul, nakedness and want. Having thus bared his feet before God, and counted the sands of his life and found them few, he turns to God and cries to Him those ever lovely words—

"O satisfy us early with thy mercy."

Early, too. For that word "early" is worth noting. Who hungers much is great for earliness;

when the traveller comes in tired and hungry the cooking must be hurried, and the preparations few, that he be not kept long waiting.

So, sitting there in his sorrow, he cries, "O satisfy us early with thy mercy." We want it. We die for it. Give to us,—with only our threescore years and ten,—give unto us, *early*, thy mercy. And why? "That we may rejoice and be glad all our days." What had life to give to that man? I see him there, in his tent, watching the sea of human life; looking out at the watch-fires of the perverse and stiff-necked people; hearing the fierce, turbulent generation cry for their golden gods; thinking of the friends left behind on the journey, and of the few more sands that are left to run for him; and crying, "O satisfy us early with thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days." All the few days that are left to them.

Then, with a fine humanity, he says, "Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us." He counts them up,—those sorrowful days,—and then he turns to the other balance, and says—

"Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us."

The "supreme" beauty, for that is evidently the meaning given to the word beauty there.

The beauty of God?

We know little of the beauty of God. We could not bear it. There is no full thought of the Almighty which is not too much for us.

We feel at times as did the little child in Homer's glorious poem. When his father would have taken him in his arms, and given him the father's kiss, the little child was afraid; but when off the proud head he took the bright helmet—ah! then the little one could kiss him. So, if I look at the helmet of God, I am afraid. Moses once wanted to see God, and he says he did, but he saw Him "behind a veil." Even great men have to veil themselves sometimes, lest their glory should be too much. Their helmet is all too bright, its glitter all too strong, its splendour all too dazzling.

Thus God has sent His Son into this world to reveal His glory, and in such fashion, that, looking at him, we may love him; and loving, obey. The life of Christ upon earth is the revelation of the beauty of God that can be upon us. Such beauty as we see in Christ is the only beauty of God that is possible to humanity, and is the only true beauty in man. Therefore I count the meaning of the

words to be—"Let such beauty as we can approach, be ours."

What, then, is "the beauty of the Lord our God"? Were you and I unstained by sin, unspoiled by folly, what beauty except His eternity should we want? They that tell us of the angels declare that they stand in the presence of God, and that His beauty is reflected in them. But, for the sinful souls who once were there, the beauty of paradise became too much, and they, having lost inward beauty, bore outward grace no longer.

What *is* the supreme beauty of men and women? Some seem to think that the golden crown of kings and the splendour of the princes of this world is the greatest beauty of humanity. But what do *you* think, now, is the greatest and most beautiful thing in manhood? Ask yourselves the question.

Listen!

'And the Lord Jesus took a little child and set him in the midst of them, and said, Except ye become as this little one, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Now what is the supreme beauty of childhood? It was the moral beauty of childhood of which Christ was speaking. We are to be innocent and sweet as once we were in baby-days; simplicity is one of the chief beauties of a little child. And the

child has sometimes one beauty that even the great God cannot have. How exceeding lovely it looks when asking forgiveness and trying to make friends! O sight of sights! To see the little child crying for forgiveness, to watch the little passion-flower opening, and only waiting to hear the words of pardon, of love, before it bursts forth into fulness.

It is said of God that "He is slow to anger." We cannot say this of the little child. It is quick to be roused. I can excuse a man, though perhaps he is to be blamed sometimes, who is quick to be roused. When the inward fire is bright and great, it must have some outlet. And like the volcano, when not violent enough to be dangerous, it supplies a soil so fruitful that the finest vines grow best upon it. The rich wine from them has been called *Lachrymæ Christi.*

But the little child, though not slow to anger, has the "beauty of the Lord" upon it, inasmuch as it forgives so quickly and forgets so fast. It is this readiness to forgive that I count the supreme charm of childhood, and the greatest beauty of man.

And now pass away from childhood, and watch some men and women that you know—some of the unloveliest, and most unready to forgive. It is

sad to be a prodigal, but it is a worse thing to be slow to forgive. Watch some of these people when they are going to forgive,—some of those unlovely people, who stand on their dignity, and who never come down from that lofty height to meet the prodigal. Having got on to their throne, do you think they would go and meet him? Not they. "No," they say, "let him come to me!" And then, the air with which they listen to his confession! And, before they give their pardon, how they fumble, as they do for a coin in their pockets, (for I have often watched these stingy people, when there is going to be a collection, how they fumble before they find a coin; and when at last they do find one, they have another search round, to see if they cannot find a smaller one); so they fumble and search to see whether they cannot give the smallest coin of forgiveness that is possible for them. If I come to pay you a bill, and you say, "I think, sir, there is a little former account owing," that is right, if it is so. But if your offending friend is coming, and cries to you, "Forgive me," and you say, "Wait, wait! Do you remember some years ago what you said?" Before you can give a receipt, do you want his offences piled up, that you may be exalted by the

largeness of your forgiveness? Listen to the tale of the prodigal. The generous heart of the father cannot listen to all the poor prodigal has to say; forgiveness outruns confession, pardon leaps along more quickly than penitence. I have no doubt that father was impatient of the bubbling words of penitence—"Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Before these words could well be spoken, I hear him say, "Bring the fatted calf: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found."

He called him not to account for his wasted portion; he asked no tales of the far country; he reproached not the poor penitent lad who trusted in his forgiveness; he loved to forgive him.

And in this story there is a deep beauty. The poor lad was never so beautiful as when prostrate in humility and asking to be forgiven, and man is never more beautiful than when forgiving. This, then, is the supreme beauty of man,—readiness to forgive—to smother your words of self-exaltation, to stay the penitent mouth with the fatted calf, to comfort the penitent heart by sounds of music. Oh! if I were a painter, and wanted to paint man in his beauty, I would take that father in the hour

when he forgave his son, and I would write underneath,—"Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us."

Now, are any of you cold-hearted enough to sit down and add up all the sins that have been committed against you before you can discharge the total? When you have been to an inn, it is pleasant to watch you looking to see whether you have been cheated of a sixpence, or have paid too little. They who toil for farthings are nice about mites. But who looks to see whether his mercy is big enough for the penitent! He whose mercy is not large enough for all possibilities of sin,—that man is not lovely. "The beauty of the Lord our God" is that His mercy is large enough for all. Of all pitiful sights, the most pitiful is to see a man making little terms and conditions about his forgiveness. "If you promise to behave better in the future, perhaps I may forgive you;" or, "I will take you on a month's trial, and then, if you show signs of behaving better, I may forgive you." Anything unbountiful is unbeautiful. An open hand and an open heart are the things that men love; but remember, the open heart is ever ready to forgive. It is the divinest thing that sinful man can do; man is at his highest when he is forgiving. Then it is that he comes nearest to God.

In time to come, ponder on these words,—"Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." Let not this epitaph be written over us,—"He was slow to forgive." Rather let it be said of us,—"He was a fool, he was poor and unsuccessful;" but, if possible, let these words be written also, "He was ever ready to forgive," that they who go by may say, "In one thing, at least, the beauty of the Lord his God was upon him,—he was ever ready to forgive."

May we be as ready to forgive as it is urgent that we should be forgiven; remembering the words of the New Testament—

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

But may we rise far above that, and covet the supreme beauty of the Lord our God; for He is good, and ready to forgive.

OLD MEN'S PRAISES.

"Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children: let them praise the name of the Lord."—PSALM cxlviii. 12, 13.

NOW, that young men and maidens should be called upon to praise God, seems to be a matter of course, for the very fulness of their life should dictate the song. That children, too, should be asked to lend their strains to the song, seems natural. But that *old* men should be called upon—that, at first, seems strange. These choristers, you might think, were long ago dismissed from duty, their voice being unfit for further exertion; and so it would be, if outward praise, the praise of the lips, were that of which the Psalmist was speaking. But every one can give praise of some kind, and the great song goes up from the life, and manners, and ways of old men, as much as it does from the tuneful voices of the young.

Let us look for a minute or two at the part which an old man can contribute to the grand song of God's praise. There is a natural feeling against old age, a natural dread of it, but a most degraded fear of it. The one thing that all men must come to, fools among them hate to think of. The one thing they ought always to be ready for, is the one thing they try most to put out of sight.

But the old man, as I shall try to show you, can contribute more to the praise of God than any young man or maiden can possibly do. Though he has lost something, he has gained much. The inspiration and the rapture of the young are lasting, only so long as that which calls them up exists; but the old man has had time to discover that although there are many things that have long ago passed away from him, there is one blessed thing in the human heart that knows no age, and that is, true love for others.

The man who starts in life with a narrow heart, finds that it never grows; but he who begins with a large heart, will find that it ever becomes larger. It is the peculiarity of what we call "the heart," that it cannot grow except it begin big; and then, to him that hath much, much is given. So the one important thing to teach a child is, how he may

"enlarge his heart." It is possible, by a course of gymnastic exercises, to get the chest broadened; but a broad chest, with a shrunken heart underneath it, is an ugly sight. It is like a portal fit for a giant to enter, from which nothing but dwarfs come forth. Now, he who starts with bigness of heart, he who has large capital laid out therein, shall receive much interest; and the more capital is added to it, the more compound that interest by-and-by becomes.

There are many things that are, of course, chilled by age, and, if you are wise, you can tell upon your fingers the things in which you must not expect to improve. The eye expects not to have its old power or lustre; the head must lose some of its glory; and the step must become slower. The old man must expect that his memory will show signs of decay and become dim, like the faded picture upon the wall. The fire can never be lighted again, in this world, for a decayed memory. No, it hath not two lives; when it is dead, it is dead for ever;—or, if not actually dead, it has gone to sleep, until it shall be revived again in a brighter world. We hope that it will happen to the lost powers of man, that, in a better world, they may be restored, as faded pictures are in the hands of

the cunning artist, to freshness of outline and glory of colour.

But whilst memory must be sapped, and wit lose much of its sharpness and point, yet there is no necessity whatever that the heart, and the loves that grow out of it, should suffer. True love is eternal,—wheresoever any one has that, he has laid hold upon everlasting life.

It is said that each breath we draw shortens our life by so many seconds. And this is true of everything except the heart's affection; there is no waste in that. Who spends many nights in study, when he should spend them in sleep, cuts off the number of his days. Who undertakes too much bodily labour, shortens his life, and cripples his power. But with the heart there is no waste; you can pour out love without measure, without diminishing its vitality; no man need love the less to-morrow because he has loved much to-day. Thus, you will understand how it is that the old man may be called to the choir to sing God's praises, because, in the divinest of all things, he is as young as ever.

How often we see shallow people making sport of the manifestations of an old man's love and fondness for his little grandchildren! Nothing can

be more glorious and beautiful than the large affection of an old man, and the powerful demonstration of it. Fairest of pictures is that of an old man and a little child together,—each lending to each a double charm! Nothing can be pleasanter than to see a hearty old man able to laugh and love. Instead of making sport of him, you should rejoice because every one is able to join the choir of God. What lovelier picture than that of the old man taking the little child in his arms, and saying—

"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

Therefore the child should be taught to know that Love is above all things; the one supreme thing that time cannot touch, that the thief hath no part in, that moth and rust are not able to corrupt.

For it is well to remember that the great secret of a man's keeping young is that he do keep within him a loving heart. This was the secret of that glorious fable the ancients fashioned,—of one who asked of the gods never to die, but forgot to ask to be ever young, and so he found himself burdened. The better prayer is this, that we may always remain young. And this we may do, by our large power of loving-kindness and charity.

Now, this being so, it becomes natural that the old man should be called in to sing the praises of God; because the old man, if he have a loving soul, is a perpetual witness of the little power that Time has over the great things of the soul. These men deride Time, and show that the deepest things of the spirit cannot be touched, even by death.

Some of you have noticed what a strange pleasure it is, when summer is gone and autumn is past, in some shady place to find a late flower, some sweet forget-me-not, which has profited by the shelter afforded it. So the beauty of old age is when it has carried the best flowers of the heart out into the winter of life, which thus gain grace and beauty by their lateness, and have a richness and fulness which none other can have. It is better to be praised on account of one's history, than for hopes which may never be realized. There is something, to me, pitifully ridiculous in the extravagant things often said about any plan just starting; so many of these plans have to be given up before long. The praise of hope has much of sweetness in it, but it is thin in the strain. When we hear the praise of one who has fought many battles, and gone through many troubles and trials, and done well,—then we hear a far nobler

praise than that of his youthful hopes. We cannot praise God upon the history of a young hope, but the old man has a wonderful collection of histories of "has beens." Those two words, "*has been*," are often pronounced as though they were a kill-joy; yet they are precisely those that should be our glory. True, the old man is not what he was. But he can tell of so many "has beens," and therefore is he called into the choir, to sing the praises learned in his history.

Young men and maidens! you have large probabilities and great possibilities to look forward to, but the old man can speak of history and experience. The old man can call upon God for reasons which young people know not of. He can reverently appeal to God, as David did—

"Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy loving-kindnesses; for they have been ever of old."

"O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come."

The old man can pour into his praise the history of his deliverances. God grant to me to hear the song that comes out of history, much as I rejoice in the praise that comes of hope. The old man's

praise is like the return of a warrior after battle. His march to battle was joyous, his uniform speckless, his weapons bright, and the music loud and gladsome, but his return home has a deeper pathos in it;—his uniform is stained now, and he comes back a rugged, weather-beaten, crippled man; yet, though there is something sad about it, his return is, after all, more touching than his going forth. The song of the veteran cannot be spared, for he who can tell of triumphs, tells at the same time of victory and strength.

Though a few years are nothing to set off against God's eternity,—yet that eternity is better understood at threescore years than at ten. The old man has had a longer acquaintance with God, therefore he draws upon the past, and thinks of the salvation of God in days of old. He has seen life, and has found God to be good. He can refer to past things, and stake a new venture upon them.

The praise of God can be quite as perfectly rendered by life and conduct as by music; and, instead of the old man losing the power of praising God, there is a depth and beauty in his praise which can be found nowhere else.

In what are called "sacred choirs," composed

of young people, too often the hearts of the singers are filled with frivolity, and they are giggling and flirting, even when the sounds of God's praises are upon their lips,—but the devout look, and the penitent heart of the older man, these things are wonderful praises of God. The schoolmaster is praised by the conduct of the children out of school quite as much as when they are screaming the multiplication-table; so man may praise God in every work and every action of daily life. Therefore the old man has great possibilities of showing that this life is, after all, well worth the having.

Now lay these things to heart. The querulousness, and peevishness, and egotism of old age may be greatly checked if they are looked upon as possible diseases, to be provided against in early life. It is piteous to see how selfish some old people are. The man in middle life is usually too busy to think much of himself. When you have six or seven children about you, and but few pence in your pocket, there is not much time to think of self. Many children bring many cares, and care for others has a wonderful power of emptying a man of selfishness and egotism; the best provision he can make against the querulous-

ness of old age, is to think least of himself and most of others. So do not find fault and say, "These children want so much education!" That is the very reason they are here. They came into the world on your behalf.

The best of all services is that which we give to the weak, the unlovely, and the unloved. For, running through the whole gospel, is this one principle of self-sacrifice—

"For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye?"

"Love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again, and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil."

Always bestow your services in unlikely places; do not invite those who will give you dinners, but invite those who cannot repay you. The loveliest service of God is the crucifixion of self for the sake of the unlovely.

If all old men and women were like some that I have known, we should not have many of them in the choir of God. I look upon them, I cannot say with love, but I value them nevertheless, because it is possible that, by them, others may take

warning. For, of all unloveliness, there is nothing so unlovely as to see an old man who has lived his life and has grown spiteful; who has had his day, and at eventide has become detestable; whose miserable old life gutters down like a wretched candle, pitiful, spitting to the last.

Would you like to have that grace of manners in old age which comes of large loving-kindness? Be warned in time. "To him that hath shall be given;" and if you do not increase in kindliness now, by-and-by shall be taken from you even that which you have.

But some querulousness is natural to old age, and should be gently treated: Fears gather round the old man, and his steps do stumble, and he needs so much of our tenderness! The ancients set a high value upon the way in which young people took care of the old ones. Among some nations the want of it was looked upon not only as an ungraciousness, but as a deadly sin, so that it was said that

"The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it."

This was a bitter, strong way of uttering a great truth. He who, to the aged, shall be harsh, shall

have harshness himself. Reverence towards old age is lovely. Remember the old man's tribulations, and when you hear his history, and all the deliverances he has experienced, you will understand how it is that he should be called in to sing God's praise.

I sometimes wonder why young folks don't make more use of old people than they do. I find it fascinating to hear old sailors talk, and to listen to their many stories of hair-breadth escapes. Remember that one of the privileges of old age is to be a guide to the young. Young men should take warning and instruction from old men, for they have been over the ground, and know all the risks and dangers of life.

May God grant to you and me such increasing wisdom with increasing age, that if it should be ours to stay late in this world, our voices, made trembling by the length of the journey, may yet join with the young man in singing the praises of the Lord our God! And may the very babe and the old man lift up together the great thanksgiving, the one bringing the sweetness of hope, and the other the deep rich notes of history and recorded praise!

"THE LORD PRESERVETH THE SIMPLE."

"The Lord preserveth the simple."—PSALM cxvi. 6.*

NOW before it is wise to make any large explanation of these words, it is needful to know what the word "simple" means; for if we do not, we shall be misguided.

The word "simple" has had to suffer, like all things in life, by wear and tear, and change. Families go not more up and down in life than words do. As families, who have started nobly, often sink into ultimate badness, so is it with words. And nothing spoils words so much as use. If a noble word comes to be much used, the golden word, like a golden coin which is much handled, becomes lessened in weight. So the laws of wear and tear need to be thought of and understood.

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* See p. 140 of Prayers.

No one man thinks his own foot to be guilty of wearing away a stone, and yet the softest footfall steals something from the ground on which it steps. Hardest gold is spoiled by softest touch. So the sweetest word, except it be nobly used, sinks down to the level of the user.

There are few studies more fascinating than that of the rise and fall of words. Words that have been used as lovely incense, come at last to be words of contempt. Did one doubt the depravity of human nature, one could learn it out of a dictionary. Not more surely did the tongue of Peter tell the damsel whence he came, than do words betray whence they are derived.

The word "simple," in its early origin, is a lovely one. It meant, not complex, not difficult. It meant something easy to be understood, plain to be stated. A "simple" man was a man of simple tastes, of few wants, easily pleased. When the word is used so, it is a word of praise. It means that the fine show of this world has for that man but little charm, that a few things can make him happy, that he can be content with a very little garden, that a very few flowers will give him pleasure, that a very small amount in his basket and in his purse will carry him home with a light

foot and happy heart. When we speak of a simple thing, we still mean one that is easy to be understood.

Thus the first original meaning of "simple" is always a good one. When we speak of a "simple-souled," "simple-mannered" man, we mean a man of simple tastes; and, in that sense, it is always a word of praise.

But by-and-by, owing to the perverseness of human nature, men came to think of the word "simple" as meaning something shallow and stupid. That is the second meaning of it.

So, when you speak of a man as a "simple soul," how am I to tell whether you are praising him or not? When you say "poor simple soul," I know you are using the word in its bad sense. But when you speak of a "simple-souled man," you are speaking of a man of pure purpose, plain meaning, quietly calm, content within boundaries, placid under difficulties. Oh! then I know you mean it as a word of praise.

Thus do noble words come too often to have a bad meaning attached to them; and you cannot always tell, by the words themselves, what is meant—it depends much upon the tone and the look of the utterer.

So there are two senses in which one might pray God to preserve the "simple." In the sense of praise, would to God we were more simple than we are; for to be simple in the godly meaning puts a man under the shelter of the Almighty, and to say, "The Lord preserveth the simple," is but to state in another phrase—

"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

I explained to you this morning what contentment meant. We were dealing then with contentment and quietness of spirit under the narrowness of circumstances, the closeness of the boundary, the nearness of the limit; but to-night, in speaking of simplicity, we are speaking of a higher contentment still, of being quiet under more fretful conditions, of being at peace in God, when the soul is plagued with doubt.

The ordinary meaning of contentment is this,—that in favourable circumstances or unfavourable circumstances a contented man can withdraw himself into calm quietness. But bethink you, for a moment, how many of the miseries of life are dependent upon what men call circumstances. Even riches cannot bring peace. One of the old pagan poets draws a picture of black Care in

pursuit of a man, mounting behind him upon his horse, taking passage with him in the ship, haunting him at home and abroad. And Shakespeare says,

"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

I have a profound contempt for what men call pain and misery; the fear of these things seldom invades a brave man's soul. I care little for bodily pain, for I always make it stand outside the gates;—if that were all, one could easily be content. I have scant pity for those whose greatest misery in this world is the pain of mere bodily wounds, sickness, and disaster. And I have less pity for those whose chief misery is poverty, short allowance, early hours, and late to bed. These are all evils, but they are only skin scratches; the brave man rubs them, and forgets them. The real troubles of life go deeper than that.

If I had my choice again I would rather have an increase of scratches, and a diminishing of doubts; I would rather have pain of body, if you will keep free my immortal spirit. Darken the window, but brighten my soul; empty my purse, but fill full my heart. It is because there is no safety in outward circumstances, that one cries,—"Give me neither poverty nor riches," for not in them can the

soul find contentment. But for the soul's doubts, and for the mind's darkness, there is a higher stage of contentment, only to be found in the simplicity which the Lord preserves.

Now, to be simple, is this,—to find you know very little, to find you know next to nothing about life, to find that you don't know in the least what is the origin of evil, that you don't know anything about the soul of the world, the nature of heaven, the depth of hell, the mystery of eternity, and so forth;—and yet to be contented, to go on with your work, and do your duty, eating, sleeping, in perfect faith and trust,—that is to be "simple-minded."

Now let us look at two or three of the evils, as we call them, which plague those of us who are not simple and contented,—some of the conditions under which God has chosen that this life of ours should go on. There is the origin of evil—that is very perplexing; most of us have had our speculations about it, but we have come away empty-handed. Those who have spent days over it, and those who have given years of thought to it, have both been equally rewarded, and have come equally empty away; neither knows more about it than the other.

It is well to talk about it, especially when you

are young, but age learns what not to know, and what not to try to know. This subject is a very frequent one for debating classes, and the question is determined by vote; but no one is satisfied. It is generally settled that the devil is the origin of evil; we must push the thing further back, and ask, Who is the origin of the devil? How came the devil into this world?

Until at last we find ourselves getting simple in the bad sense,—wasting thought upon things too high for us.

If it is asserted that the world rests upon a tortoise, we must go back, and ask, What does the tortoise rest upon? and then, What does that rest upon, and what does the last thing rest upon?

"The Lord preserveth the simple," and I thank God He has preserved me in that matter. He has not darkened my eyes, but He has made me simple, not to know, nor wish to know, nor try to know these things, nor try to regulate my conduct by knowing them. He has given me room enough to be wise, room enough to be godly, and, alas! room enough to be foolish, room enough to miss the tree of life; so I want to be simple, and leave that business behind.

There are many things we want to understand,

and cannot. There is fate, and free-will, and predestination,—but I can leave them now. Luther, Erasmus, Calvin, and many others, greater than I, have sought to understand these things, and have come empty away. Men of large learning, and sometimes much temper, have discussed these things, and have got angry over them, and thrown texts and anathemas at one another. Blessed is the man who comes out of the theological chamber and says, "I am content not to know these things; they are too high for me. I have been thirty years at them, and I confess I know no more now than when I began. So I have laid that burden down. My soul was getting parched and dry with all this affectation of wisdom and profoundness, until one day I laid it all down, and went and joined the simple,—those who are content to know that round about these things God has seen fit to throw a veil, through which they cannot penetrate."

Can you harmonize all these seeming contradictions? Yes. Where can you do it? Out at work. I have never known a man take a spade, and go out in his garden to work, who did not come in better tempered. Let a man but do his duty as he ought, and his mind will become clearer; yes, and he will become simpler in the divine sense, having

trusted more in God, having left more to Him, and less to himself; having given up the complex, he will settle calmly down to the simple.

I cannot make out anything in life clearly. I look round and I see that nature is fierce, and men are cruel, and the world is full of rapine and plunder, and the strong prey upon the weak, and the weak go to the wall. What can I do? I go and join the simple-hearted, give up trying to understand the philosophy of life, and retreat to him who said—

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

And, knowing that he gives no rest to the restless, I lay down my understanding, and sit lowly at his feet, as Mary did, hoping to be raised by his words of mercy. So, count me amongst the simple.

Then, there is another great burden of humanity —the burden of the mystery of death—and especially death amongst little children, the bud nipped by sickness, disaster, disease, fever; these things sometimes become a great burden. Now, if you belong not to the simple, you will rise up in revolt, and curse like Byron, and stand in the waysides, and say—"Was ever grief like this?"

These things are hieroglyphics upon the wall. I cannot read them, so I storm, and curse, and complain; but by-and-by I get wiser, and say—"Enlist me amongst the simple; enlarge my trust in Him who knows; diminish my impatience, for I know not;" until at last I bow my head, and say—

"Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it."

So I leave the philosophers, and go to Bethany, and sit me down at the feet of the Lord, and listen to him as he tells about the quiet heart, and the meek spirit, and speaks of trust, and faith, and a childlike disposition. I speculate no more upon death, and the world to come; I read no longer dry books about the immortality of the soul and descriptions of heaven; I give them all up, and cry—"Enlist me amongst the simple." Speak for me, O Christ, one sentence—

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am."

What is it to me where that is? In Him is pureness and peace. "Lead, kindly light," is all a wise man's cry. Where heaven is I do not know; but to be where He is,—ah! that is sound know-

ledge for the simple, large knowledge for the lowly.

And then, sometimes, one is troubled by the want of certainty that is over almost everything. There are not many things in this world that even a wise man can be certain about. There are a few laws about mathematics and so on, that are exceedingly well established, but these are such poor things to be certain about. If I ask, "Where is the next world, and what is it like? Will evil ever go out of the world, and when? Will Christ come upon the earth a second time, or not?"—these are questions that cannot be answered. Some people attempt to settle these things by raging about the infallibility of the pope, others pronounce the Bible to be infallible,—but it will not do. So my poor heart, vext with popes, and bibles, and preachers, and doctrines, cries out unto God—"Count me, O God, amongst the simple—content not to be certain, except of a few things; and to do them rather than to state them."

I give up grumbling; I give up complaining that I am not infallible; that I have no wings; that no fairy has ever given to me three hands; that I am not able to do without sleep,—which is unpleasant when I am busy. For to those of you

who are covetous, and want to make money all the way through the twenty-four hours, it must be very galling to have to give up so many hours every night for sleep. And it is painful to the student to find that his eyes fail him before the lamp dies down, and that when the cock crows the book is but half read, and the lesson but half learned. I have done with all that now,—given it all up. So I describe myself as a creature with an immortal soul, an heir of immortality; but yet obliged to eat every four hours; obliged to lie every night in a horizontal position (looking very foolish, I have no doubt, as most people do when they are asleep). Yet I am simple, content; I no longer kick, or repine, but am willing to go off to sleep, as little children do when play may no longer hold the sweet eyelids up. So I lay me down now to rest, confident in God.

And if a man can learn thus to be satisfied with his bodily conditions, shall it not be so in spiritual things? Man wants to know everything, and cannot; he would like to know to-morrow's history before it comes, but he cannot; the prophet can tell you many things, but he cannot tell you what you will suffer during the next five minutes. With all my powers, I am, after all, but a limited, re-

strained, poor, naked, cribbed, confined being; so I say,—"Join me to Thy simple ones, O God." I want to know all about God, but the quiet hand of the Lord Christ comes and touches me, as softly as the touch of a little child, and I hear His voice saying unto me,—"Be peaceful; be quiet;—

'He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father also.'"

So when all these things press upon me,—the divine desires, the noble powers, the infinite hopes of Man, yet with vision so dim that he cannot penetrate beyond the grave,—I join myself to the simple. For what is simplicity? It is to know these things, to observe them, to state them, and yet not to storm over them, but to be quiet under them, to sit down and be at peace. And when even the supremest sorrow is upon us, if we have this simplicity, we may say, as Job did—

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

This is the divine simplicity of Man—to acknowledge his limits, to be aware of the boundaries, to know what things cannot be known, to understand that there are some things that cannot be understood, to give up infallibility, to cease to try to understand God or to strain after Him "whom no man hath seen at any time." Those who are thus

faithful can sing songs in the night, and fall into the Eternal Arms, and rest themselves, not in what they know, but in what they trust. Then comes the last saying,—"The Lord preserveth the simple."

May God give unto all of us, in whatsoever state we are, to know how to be quiet in the divinest of all senses; and, amidst all our passionate longings and glorious attempts to know what we may know, nevertheless to choose the "good part," which is to sit lowly at the feet of the Lord! For those two women elected the noblest wisdom,—the one who was sinful chose the feet to anoint; and the one who was simple and teachable chose the feet also. The sad and sinful soul wept over his feet, feeling herself not worthy to rise and anoint his head, and to her he gave immortality in the Gospel; and to her who sat at his feet, lowly, simple, asking only to listen to his words—what said he to her? O words of highest praise!—

"Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Whoso chooses that "good part" in this world, shall have the peace that passeth all understanding while doing it, and shall come at last to the Life which is for Evermore.

SONGS IN THE NIGHT.

" I call to remembrance my song in the night."—
PSALM lxxvii.

"GRANT," said a woman to Christ, "that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom."

Now, this was Pharisaism, genteelism, the vulgarity of ambition, and the meanness of rivalry. Amongst great souls those never exist; they know no rivalry, have no ambition, and in the Psalms you have a proof of this. One singer does not try to out-rival another, but the songs of all (though upon different subjects) blend into one sweet harmonious hymn of praise.

The Psalm I read to you was not written by David; it is written by that man of whom we know so little, and yet so much; it is written by Asaph. Who he was, and what he did, I can scarcely tell. I know nothing of his outward life,

—that is a small business,—but of all his woes, sorrows, sadnesses, fainting, failing, falling; his recovery, rising, rapture, and victory,—all these things this man has set down with a touch that David himself could not rival, and with an emphasis of feeling that the great master of feeling did never outdo; and of all his psalms, this, perhaps, is the best.

It is the history of a soul slowly working itself out into daylight, and therefore, into victory; and it is expressed with a plainness that makes the whole of his miserable life come before us.

"I remembered God, and was troubled."

No man has written a sentence that tells of sorrow like that. In remembering God, His mercy, loving-kindness, love, peace, he was troubled. In finding God, after he has searched for Him, he is troubled. It is the trouble of him of old, who hid himself when God called for him; it is the trouble of the sinful soul when he sees the holy soul enter. It is the trouble of the passionate modesty of those who know their hearts and houses are not good enough for God, the outcry of one who, seeing what God was, was even troubled with His greatness and goodness. It is the trouble of ashamed-

ness and of sin; and it may be, of that deeper trouble which comes of knowing God, and seeing all the evil things God seems to do.

For the darkest night that perhaps the soul can well know, apart from the sorrow of its own sinfulness, is that of watching God's ways, and seeing how hard sometimes they seem to be; and it is a heavy thing for a man to sing a song in such a night.

"I call to remembrance my song in the night."

The night is, of course, spoken of poetically; meaning the night of life. The night, spiritually speaking, is that time in a man's life, when, from whatever cause it may be, all that is gladsome and light, plain and clear, obvious and a matter of praise, has gone out.

Such times this man knew, and we also know them. When nothing is good, but all appears evil, and we think of the Author of all things as beholding everything with the same cruel, relentless, pitiless eye, then the soul sinks down, and says—

"I remembered God, and was troubled."

Take a familiar case that has just happened. There is nothing more piteous than the story of those poor hard-working miners, who, in the midst

of honest labour, toiling for bread, were smitten to death. That was a dark night for them, immured in the deeps of the earth, and it is a dark night to those who read that piteous story. Buried before death—entombed in life—watching death come—waiting for it quietly, patiently, hopelessly, helplessly,—that was night indeed, and it is night to any man who reads of it at first.

For why so? says the heart. They were honest, simply going about their daily labour. Why should these things be? And until a man can look such a calamity in the face, and, weeping such tears as sympathetic sorrow must weep, through those can sing the same song he has sung in the daytime, he has not mastered the depths of trust, nor entered into the amazing comforts of faith.

Can you do it? Can you say—

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord"?

Or are you still lost in the usual talk of interpositions, special providences, miraculous deliverances, and marvellous escapes? Are you man enough yet to say, that perhaps because God *loved* those poor miners, He let them die? This is the triumph of faith, and the ultimate peace which a man gets when he is not disturbed by cases like

this, but can still sing his song, though it be in the night. For there is no Theism that does not take a man this distance, that for every one of those poor souls lying there over their grave, it was better for them to die than that they should live. There can be no true Theism which teaches that God interposes to save one, and not the others. There is no "interposition" of God in this world in the sense that He is not always ruling. The world is all His. Everything that is, is of God. He is overruling all things and all men always, that they may work together till the day when God shall be all in all.

Now, intellectually, a man may be able to argue this out. Yes, but long after a man sees a thing with his intellect, he finds it exceedingly hard to love it with his heart. It is extremely easy to say, "Death is good;" but it is a different thing altogether to acknowledge that when it comes. It is easy to sit down on a Sunday morning and write a treatise on death; but when the death comes, when the little child dies, how then? Ah! then it is night. The praises of danger are written by men in safety, but the thing is to sing as this man did, when the dark night is upon us.

"I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed."

I cannot sleep. The night is come, but no sleep, no rest; and of all drearinesses to the body, that is one of the dreariest—to lie and sleep not, to close the eyes and find no refreshment, to count the long hours of a winter night and wonder when it will be morning; to have the experience of Job:—

"When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone?"

and when the dawning of day comes, to say, "When will it be night? Thou holdest me awake, instead of being at peace with Thee."

"I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed."

I cannot sleep in Thee, or trust in Thee; and at last he says—

"I am so troubled that I cannot speak."

For this is the last sorrow unto which the soul can come. It cannot be quiet, it cannot sleep in God, it cannot trust in Him, it cannot even speak. Dumb, dark, hopeless, trustless; beholding God, but unable to kiss Him; acknowledging the Father, but unable to love Him; never, I say, did man set forth the deepest sorrow of the soul better than this man.

But he works out of this difficulty. Finding he

can get no sleep, no trust, that it is night, then he said he called to remembrance the daytime, and in the dark he thought of the light. And as he had no light, not even one feeble rushlight of faith, being all dark, what did he do? He looked out of the bars of his window of darkness, and thought of the old light of bygone times. For though there are times when the soul cannot sing, nor the heart be glad, yet, even then, the old days may be thought of.

A man may get up amid his own darkness, and look out unto the light of another man's window, and he can take comfort from that. So this is what this wise soul did. He goes to the window—he knows where it is—and looking out through the great darkness, he says—

"I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times."

For, thank God, to-day's darkness blots not out yesterday's light, and in the depths of winter it is oftentimes pleasant to remember the summer glory. So the uses of darkness are sometimes to make men value the light.

Now this is the remedy. He called to mind olden days, and so, by degrees, the light came. He speaks most pathetic words. "It is so dark, I

cannot sing; I have nothing to say to Thee, O God, but I will call to remembrance the song I did sing once." And so the memory does what the heart could not do at the time; and even from this little beginning, if you read the psalm with care, you will see that victory commences :—

"I call to remembrance my song in the night."

And the tongue, too dumb to sing, still, perhaps, whispers to itself the old song.

And here mark, amongst other things, the use of learning songs, and singing them when you are young and glad; they get into the memory, and they lie there till they are needed. Mark the uses of a wise education, a holy culture, an intellectual bringing up, an artistic delight, a spiritual learning, so that when the night comes and we cannot sing, there are old stories to fall back upon.

Now in calling to remembrance the old song, he called to mind that he had once sung it. What had been, might be; yesterday is as to-morrow; old summers foretell future summers; and therefore he says, No light now, but there was light once; I will call that to remembrance.

Who, that knows anything of his own heart, will not know that from sometimes reciting the words

of the old song, which once did warm the heart, and from merely saying the Lord's song, we have taken to singing it again, even in the greatest, deepest sorrow of the soul?

But some of you may say that the very fact that you have known better days, and know them not now, is a source of deeper trouble. Not at all. A thing that hath been, may be. It is the very fact of the fickleness of the weather that gives us hope. It is now night; I call to remembrance the song I have sung in summer days. I have seen sweet times of peace; they are gone now, they will come again. Ask me about next year's swallows, I call to remembrance the swallows of the past. They have been, they are not now, but they will come again. Their being gone is the warrant of their coming again. Were they here, I should look forward to their going; but as they are gone, I look forward to their returning.

So it is the fickleness of things that gives a man a song in the night-time, for it is when things are passing that he knows of necessity they must revolve again; and the time to believe in the daylight is in the night-time, for we know that the next thing that will come will be the daylight

again. The soul is very subtle. Large property in pleasure brings much fear, and the anxious know it. How one trembles in the daytime because the night draws nigh!

Ponder, therefore, upon this. Take, as a rule for a wise man's life, that, when it is too dark to do anything, he can still call to mind what he did when it was light. If it is too dark to take comfort at present, remember that there was comfort once; and this is calling to remembrance the song in the night.

Take another case. A man sometimes is disappointed, disgusted, disheartened; somebody who has been a friend has deceived him, and he says, "There is no such thing as honesty;" and the man turns cynical, sceptical, and scornful, and denounces his fellows as being false, and a large part of them fools too.

Think of the utter gloom that comes when a man has been thoroughly deceived. How hard it is to believe in the eleven, when the twelfth is a rogue. That is a terrible night for a man. But call to remembrance the song of the souls we have known that have loved us truly, purely, honestly, even to the end. Open the great book, as did the king who could not sleep. As he lay there in

the night wakeful, he, like a wise man, called for the Book of the Chronicles, and read of the deeds of old. So I am in the night, perhaps disappointed with running after kings; putting trust in princes; believing in riches; finding men selling principles for gold, loving you for what they can get; always, after they have kissed you, putting out the hand with a little petition, like the dog that licks your hand when he wants to be fed. That is the night to send for the Chronicles. Read of those who were true, think of all those you have known, now gone to rest, who were staunch, honest, and faithful; and though there is no song possible just now, yet

"I call to remembrance my song in the night."

And the men that were a comfort to you are a comfort to you still.

So, far away from the land of his birth, a man, perhaps in exile, sits down in a foreign land, it may be Babylon, but he cannot sing there, his heart is sad, and his harp hangs on the willows; yet, though it is all strange around him, he can call to remembrance the song he used to sing at home. Though unable to sing (for it needs a glad heart to make a merry tongue), he can do as those Jews did, who opened

their windows and looked towards Jerusalem, that even if they could not see the wreath of the smoking sacrifice ascending, they could remember the time that had been, and so take comfort from that.

It is good to sing, but the next best thing is to think of the time when you have sung; for through the words which the heart utters it will become quiet and calm.

It is my counsel to you in all those dark days of life when, far away from hope, you think of God and are troubled; when the mist of life is too dense to see through, when the burden of life is too heavy to bear, when men are faithless,—then think of the things that have been, of the times that are past, and by degrees you will be able to go on and say—

"I communed with mine own heart,"

shut up away from everybody. And see how the process goes on. It is beautiful to watch the dawning of the light. Look at the first ray that comes.

"Will the Lord cast off for ever?"

"He appears to have cast me off. I am in such trouble I cannot speak."

"Will he be favourable no more?"

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Another ray. "He was favourable once. I remember Jerusalem."

"Is his mercy clean gone for ever?"

Another ray. "I *have* had it, I have lost it; but is it quite gone?"

"Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?"

And now comes the bright daylight in the east. Why,

"This is my infirmity,"

he says; "it is my poor little weakness; and because it is dark now, I thought it would always be dark." And then he goes on—

"But I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High,"

which is one of the grandest passages in the Scriptures.

"I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings."

And now the night is past, the soul sees the light.

"Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?"

And the man breaks forth into a rapture. In the

night he could only call to mind the remembrance of the song; the morning breaks, he sings the song itself—

"Thou art the God that doest wonders: Thou hast declared thy strength among the people. Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid; the depths also were troubled. The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook. Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known."

From this fearful picture of God, strong, mighty, and terrible, the soul breaks out into the peaceful strain—

"Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron."

Here is a perfect work, a piece of the soul's sorrow, the completest I know; the widest, the most tender, and the most touching.

When the dark night comes upon you, if it be not possible to sing the Lord's song, it will be possible to call this one of Asaph's to remembrance; and as the divine words pass through the memory, they, being divine guests, will leave a benediction.

May God grant that you and I, however sorrow-

ful, however sad we may be, may not lose the memory of the better songs, holier thoughts, wiser deeds of the past; for if a man sink deep into the slough of evil and despondency, it is well for him that he still retain the thought of what he once was.

It is not good for a man to forget the old songs, the old psalms; let him stick to them, they may serve as memories; and having been good as memories, they may come back to life again. For whoso knows the way to the tomb, may sometimes find that although the Saviour has fled, the Spirit is left to comfort, sustain, help, and conduct to the safe haven of peace.

"REJOICE, O YOUNG MAN."

"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."—ECCLESIASTES xi. 9.

OF all the scarecrows ever stuffed and stiffened to terrify the world, surely God has been the greatest! I remember when, to have been told to "Remember my Creator in the days of my youth," would have brought up to my view the most distasteful thing I could have seen. "Rejoice in the Lord!" How could I rejoice, when the Lord was presented to me chiefly amidst death and dreariness, hearses and horrors of hell? That was the way many of us were taught in our childhood; and thus the verse of the preacher that I have taken for my text was lost to us, and lost at a time when most we should have read and studied it.

Thus the great dramatist, in one of the most life-like passages in his creations, has touched with truthfulness the common notion about God; a notion tragic with the tragedy of real life. God is to these common folk the Ugly Something to be hidden away out of sight till the very end. Dame Quickly says to poor dying Falstaff, murmuring, "God!"—

"I hope there's no need to trouble about any such thing yet!"

This is said, too, with the same womanly kindness with which she would have given a draught of cold water to the sick man, with the same helpful-heartedness that would have made the pillows more easy. "I hope there's no need to trouble about God yet!"

"God," is here made the unutterable shadow that decent people put out of sight till the last moment; to the time when the physic fails, when the ink of the signature is drying on the Will, when the last damp gathers on the brow. Then the scarecrow is to be brought out. People prepare to look properly gloomy. Everything is tied up in funereal tape; and while black hatbands and crape dresses are secretly being considered—this is the appointed time for God to be thought of!

This is the grim idea of God which has got into this verse. Everybody reads it as if it were a curse, instead of a beautiful warning. Many people take all the Bible for Gospel-truth; and listen to Solomon's ravings with the reverence due only to the voice of God. They forget that the old Jewish *roué*, racked with the venom of voluptuousness, is not exhibiting a God-given life, lovesome and lovely, a life fresh from the hands of the great Creator; but a life blasted by man's brutality and bestiality.

It is as rational to accept Solomon's sum of life, as to accept the words of the drunkard, who, having carried a bunch of violets about with him all day, pitches them at last into the kennel, and because the vulgar touch of his hot hand has polluted them, calls heaven and earth to witness that there never was any grace or beauty in them.

But though there is the warning in the verse, there is also the confession that to the writer life was beautiful *once*. As we read the words we can feel the bounding pulses of happy hours, and hear the elastic tread of youth. Again the dewdrops are trembling in the kiss of morning; the mists of night are yielding to the sun, and the tree-tops

resound with the song of birds. There is nothing of cark, or care, or cloud. The young man is to rejoice, but with his rejoicing to know that "for all these things God will bring him into judgment."

How into judgment? By whom is the judgment to be brought? What is the God, and who is this judgment-bringer?

He is the Fatherhood of nature, with an understanding so tender and so wise, that everything we do is all known and compassioned, with a pity as deep as the gift of His Son.

Our earthly relationships may show us what this meaneth; dimly, perhaps, but still, clearly. When any of us have sent our children out for a holiday, and they come home tired, stained, and toilworn with play, do we reproach them? Do we taunt them with their weariness or their stains?

Do we not rather take them on our knees, and ask them where they have been, and what they have been doing, and how they have enjoyed themselves? And as we ask, trustful heads sink back on our shoulders, and trustful little hands lock in ours, and trustful little bodies rest.

And God's way with us is something like the way in which His human children treat their children. As the judgment-seat of the child is

the knee of the loving father, even so is the heart of God the tribunal before which we must stand. God gave life for happiness. It is His voice which bids the young man to rejoice, and to rejoice in his youth. But if this gift shall be abused, if love shall linger after lust, and the finger touch unholy things; if the heart hunger for that which is forbidden, and the eye strain after that which is wrong,—then the judgment threatened, but only then, comes in. It is not that rejoicing is an evil, for it is expressly commanded otherwhere; it is not that youth is a sin, else should every infant have the right of reproaching its Creator that it was not born with grey hairs. But the admonition of the text is, that in rejoicing and in youth there may be temptation; and in the temptation, power; and in the power, a chance for youth of defeat; and in the defeat, judgment—the judgment of God.

But again,—what is this God, the God of every-day life, the God of common people?

To people anxious to get along in a respectable, and perhaps comfortable way, to bring up their children honestly, to pay their debts, to do all things as becomes sober, steady, matter-of-fact citizens,—God is little more than a word of three

letters. When they were young they were busy rejoicing. As they grew older they were busy courting. Now they are busy working. Time is short, and trade is long. Customers are waiting to be served. They hope, of course, to retire some day; and then this little word of three letters is to be made into a thought, fashioned into an idea, or throned into an omnipotent conscience, reproving, blessing, comforting, consoling.

But, between the putting up of the shutters and the taking down of the same; between the taking down of the shutters and the putting up of the same again, the hours press. Balancing of trade books, settlement of accounts, enlarging of social position, these are what fill the days, and make the nights wakeful. Some time they must prepare, or rather begin to prepare, for another world. No prudent man would think of facing another world without such preparation; least of all the cautious tradesman, who knows the worth of watching markets, and the value of foresight. Were he going to New Zealand he would get charts, study guides, and collect information. Though he may change his destiny after his arrival, he will still buy him charts, and study his guides, and weigh his information. He will never put off

the preparation till he gets there, nor pride himself on a foresight which waits until he has landed in a strange country, to learn about its customs or its resources.

But of the land that lies "afar off," of the great Mother Country to which we are all, certainly, going, with all our destinies sealed,—what is the worth of a foresight which never contemplates the possibility of preparations not yet begun being suddenly made impossible?

We have read the dreams of the prophets, and the songs of those who have sung sweetly, and the words of the Wisdom Who once walked among men; and they all tell of the necessity for a preparation for the journey that is never postponed *sine die.*

About that land we may be able to read no travellers' tales, nor get guides for its golden streets, neither can we receive messages from the friends who are hidden behind its gates. But the road thither is clearly marked, and those who walk in it wisely, are those who make, by each day's duties done as each day comes, their preparations for the time when for them also the gates will be opened, and the golden streets free, and the faces of friends seen again.

The preparations, then, should be in, and of, our daily life.

The Future flows out of, and is consequent upon, the Present, as the Present is the outgrowth of the Past.

The harvest to-day is the reaping of the grain sown long ago, by our own hands, be it good seed or bad, wheat or wild oats. This day's deeds and that day's deeds, in these preparations, have the same effect, for work and worship are equal. The sitting in the Sabbath-pew, and the singing of the Sabbath-psalm, are no better than the doing up of a day-book, or the cleaning of a counter. Daily duties are helps, not hindrances, and this it is which makes a right interpretation of "Duty" of more than passing importance.

Is it a man's Duty to scrape and rake, to toil and strive, to dig and drag all and everything together, so that his children shall have so much more than anybody else's children?

Is it a man's Duty so to heap up wealth for them, as to effectually prevent their being useful to the State, useful to their generation, useful to their friends, or useful to themselves? Certainly not.

Is it a man's Duty to worry and work, to bustle and burn, to agonize and fret, to covet and scheme,

that he may have his name written on the scroll of Fame?

The writing in the Lamb's Book of Life gives to that question an answer which there is no gainsaying.

But, if "Duty" consists in the doing of appointed work, in the humble acts of a humble life, in the commonplace of existence, in eating and drinking, in speaking and thinking, in rejoicing and sorrowing,—then, that Duty faithfully done should be the Preparation for the better doing of further work in this world, and in the world to come.

For, if this be not so; if leisure be the preparation-time, if godliness be the result of idle hours, and Christian perfection only comes from peace and plenty, how, in the name of common sense and necessity, is a Woman to get to Heaven?

But there are women and women, and an answer to the inquiry, "What is Woman?" might help to answer the other question too.

What is Woman? Negatives might give a better definition than affirmatives. Woman is not a fine feathered creature, carefully spreading her skirts so that she may appear to sit gracefully, and charmingly show a most delicate wrist in the

selection of an ivory penholder, wherewith to play with more or less dainty paper. Neither is she that other elegant being, whose message to the servant, in case Want or Woe knocked at the door, would be, "Mistress has visitors, and must not be disturbed." To these, probably, Heaven would be an impertinence; and a revelation concerning the length of angels' trains would be to them of more interest than any part of an already-published Bible. The real woman has no kinship with these lay-figures, which are out of their place when they leave a milliner's shop-window.

The real woman is a sister of sorrow; her life, in nine cases out of ten, an eternal round of babies and stitching, of butchers' bills and taxpapers, of unpaid rent and clothing accounts.

Yet once, she too rejoiced, as Solomon's text bade the young man walk in the ways of his heart. There had been the happy betrothal-time, fleet as the kisses of stolen meetings. There had been the strange tumultuous marriage-morning of mingled joy and pain. Then followed a few, a very few summer days of bloom and blossom, and suddenly Reality touched Romance. The husband forgot the lover, and put off like an old garment the chivalrous tenderness with which he had won

her. To these sadnesses succeed, perhaps, broken health, an increasing family, and the daily round of domestic work, which, to a careful housewife, knows no ceasing, until the last Peace comes, and the ears, so quick to listen to fretful child-wailings in the night, are closed to all earthly sounds.

This is no fancy-picture. Women who have to bear this life, and bear it uncomplainingly, make the crowds in our streets, the great Mother-population of the world.

If Woman's life, then, be so circumscribed with cares, what leisure has she to win a place in "the Kingdom"? None, absolutely, none. Only by patient duty-doing can she accomplish that, "making," in the dear words that have been so wrested from their real meaning, "her calling and election sure."

And that this daily preparation for Heaven can go on amid the meanest cares is readily recognizable. It lies open to the briefest glance, and can be seen by the most hurried passer-by.

Has no one ever noticed some poor creature go without butter, that her children might have more bread? Has no one ever noticed the mother pretending (what a grandeur of self-sacrifice digni-

fies the deception) that she had had enough, so that her son might eat and be satisfied,—starving self for the sake of the little one,—starving self for the sake of the other self which God had given her?

Here is a home blossom, from the same Passion-tree as that which once stood on Calvary; the Passion-tree whereon Self is sacrificed.

The midnight click of the needle, painfully darning the little garments which a long succession of tiny men had worn threadbare; the hours stolen from the night; the patient, unending ministrations of love, are not these, too, of the Christ, and Christ-like? Do they not contain the germs of hope and faith, of long-suffering and forbearance? Is there not a divine sanctity in a mother's sorrow, a splendid bravery—worthy of a better life—with which she bears herself under troubles which would drive a man mad?

Yea, verily!

If God is good, as good He must be, to be God; if all He does harmonizes, as harmonize it must, with the surest interests of the wayward and the weak; if He never expects the finite to compass the infinite, or demands from the creature that which only the Creator could give;—then, in the deeds and words of such as these, comes surely, comes

slowly, but comes certainly, the Kingdom of Heaven.

Godliness may stand up to its elbows in soap-suds at the wash-tub: the soap-suds lessen not the godliness; they add to it, as the setting enhances the gem.

Popish ladies may prate about "making up their souls;" but, believing not in exploded chimeras of priesthood and pretence, we know that before God such a "making" is as the making of a lie.

God has put men and women where He knew it was best for them to be. He has planted them among work, and work-a-day working people. He has so planted them, that in work they may find worship; in trouble, perfection; in trial, comfort; in weakness, strength; in life, Heaven; and in death, Life. This is the sum of the Gospels, the lesson of toil.

Yet, besides the reward of the Hereafter, and more than the palm of the victor after the battle,—life as life has its own worth, for it is the training-time, the time for living larger, and growing greater.

There was the time for youth's rejoicing; but there is also the time for manhood's work, and he who puts off the preparation for Heaven till

Heaven is in sight, not only risks missing it, but loses some of its best lessons.

The man who leaves his saintship till he is sixty, may end by being a sinner. The conflict with self and selfishness must be fought out early. Those who are getting old feel their opportunities for learning decrease, and with them their opportunities for living out their learning decrease too. When the pulses begin to beat sedately, when life lingers where it used to run, and halts where it once had walked, the time of rest is approaching.

Sad, then, the morning's reflection and the evening's vision, to him who has only practised for the fight in his dreams, who has put off to the undawning to-morrow that which should have been done to-day.

The things which should be accomplished "in the green tree," can never be done "in the dry." The glory of a young life growing better and sweeter and holier, cannot be won when the yellow leaves fall thick and fast, and the frost has stripped the boughs of their fairness.

Let there be the period for rejoicing, and let it be enjoyed to the full: but when rejoicing is no longer possible; when there is hard work and little leisure; when there is much of rubbing and

little of resting; when the soul is sad and the heart heavy, then Heaven may be made to draw very near.

So by doing the deeds of each succeeding day in duteous sequence, by finding them like

"Altar-stairs which slope through darkness unto God,"

there shall come a manliness of endeavour and a Christian hope, which will make the passage of the Valley of the Shadow of Death light.

Thus, by so living our lives that the future life should be the outcome of the daily duty done in the daily fear of God, the Eternal Rest-day will be happy,—happy with the happiness of Heaven,—happy with the happiness of unclouded Peace.

*THE RELIGION OF POLITICS.**

"The kingdom of God cometh not with observation."—LUKE xvii. 20.

THE impatience which you sometimes hear expressed by good people against what they call a political sermon, is excusable if the heart be so sad, and so egotistical in its sorrow, as to be able to take interest only in its own concerns, and is careless of all other things than salvation of its own small soul. But when that impatience of politics from the pulpit is the result of a lazy impatience of thought, then it is to be sternly checked, by showing that the Gospel of Christ is thus deprived of its greater meaning and its broader intent, and that we have narrowed and degraded it into a miserable egotism of personal good and a pitiful attention to our own soul's salvation.

* Preached on the first Sunday of the year 1871.

For the Gospel of Christ deals with great questions of human polity in the broadest and most catholic spirit. It deals not only with the Jews as people with souls to be saved, but with the Jewish nation as a national repository of the truth of God. The glory of Jewry was that "there God was known," that there He by His law "brake the arrows of the bow," and was "terrible to the kings of the earth;" there He "arose to judgment to save all the meek of the earth;" that to the Jews His promises were made;—not for the Jews alone, but for humanity, and that through them the gradual redemption of the human race was to come.

The impatience of people against the deep principles of the polity of the world being proclaimed from the pulpit, is but part of the indolence of men who are filled with a foolish notion that they are superior to these things, and can afford to let the world go on without meddling in its affairs. The abstention from politics of all who were virtuous in France, led France to the terrible humiliation into which it lately fell; and if the principle of these "superior persons" were carried out here, it would of necessity end in a like result.

Prompt at the warehouse, admirable at the shop, nice in your own concerns and careful of your own

comforts, what is the world the better for you? or what has the growth and increase of the Kingdom of God in this world to thank you for? For the Kingdom of God is spread abroad by that great company of its subjects, the good men who are striving, and have striven, to bring this disorderly world to order, this indolent world to action, this warring world to peace.

There has been a decay of public virtue in this land since I can remember. By public virtue, I do not mean public spirit as commonly understood for of that we have at times more than enough; but by public virtue, I mean that public spirit which makes a man prefer, before his own prosperity and well-being, that of the town or country to which he belongs. Judged by this standard, how many men in this town have any public virtue? How many are there who seek public office for no personal ambition, and who really sacrifice themselves for the good of the town? And how many are there who don't meddle in these matters, and with whom the affectation of superiority, with which they decline to do so, is a simple cover of indolence? How sweet it sounds,—this philosophical indifference and superiority!—how mean it really is! By it and through it the government of towns and

nations sinks down into the hands of the vulgar, the self-seeking, and the mean. For if out of Noah's ark there come away all clean creatures, what a strange collection of unclean beasts they would leave behind!

Therefore it becomes desirable that at times, and more especially at anniversaries like this, a man should be called, even in things of religion, to look at the things of the world; to ask and to settle in his own mind this most momentous question,—to what degree is the Kingdom of God making way in his day?

"The kingdom of God cometh not with observation."

It was quietly put into the world by Christ, who, teaching certain doctrines, left them quietly to work their way in the world like the leaven in the three measures of meal.

It is strange in this human nature of ours, how, protest having been made against a certain evil, the very people who have made it, often fall into the very evil against which they have protested. Thus, in its first manifestation, Protestantism was largely inspired by a vehement hatred of the subversion of the politics of the world to the ends of the Church; and yet, by-and-by, Protestantism has

grown so indolent that it is thought to be an excellent thing to sacrifice all care for the interests of a country, and to be deaf to the calls of patriotism, in order to coddle an individual soul.

Never was there a man that God raised to great nobleness yet, who was continually looking to the right and to the left to see how his own little soul was getting along, and nowhere in the Gospel of Christ is this miserable egotism preached or praised.

Let us look, for a moment or two, at the three great principles which Christ, by constantly teaching, dropped quietly into this strange world. The first of these and the most subversive, is the Personal relation of each man's soul to the eternal God. The second is the sure and certain hope of life everlasting. The third is the responsibility of Man to the God Who gave him life.

Whether these three principles are true, we are not now discussing, but that they are Christian, is clear. And these are the three chief principles upon which the society of God's appointment—confessing, not formally, the relationship of Man to God—depends. How the first principle acts in the world must be clear to all who have studied and understood, if even in very scant measure, the

world's history. It was the conviction of this great and primal principle which lay at the very heart of the first Protestants, and the battle they fought was but the protest of the solitary soul for its relationship with God, the proclamation and protest of the individual soul against the assumption of a collective church; the very protest which I, according to my might, have made, the protest I will continue to make so long as life lasts with me, the protest of the right of each and every man to come to God in spite of pope or priests, "black, white, or grey," with all their trumpery.

Not against priests as men, but against Sacerdotalism, and against priests as its representatives; against them as setting themselves up as the only possessors of saving knowledge, and as being in the confidence of God;—against them as Priests, as men set apart, divinely appointed, we war, and will war continually. We are their deadly enemies. From that supreme pontiff of a pope, down to the last little imitation in pinchbeck of him, his claims, and doings, we are the deadly foes of the whole tribe. We consider that the great doctrine of Christ is this:—that from man's soul and conscience up to the great heart of God the road is as direct as from the eye of the little child up to the

great stars. A large part of the history of Europe is the history of the struggle against Sacerdotalism.

That Sacerdotalism has just, in this year, made its most logical protest.

It was a strange thing that that great Œcumenical Council, in which all Europe was so deeply interested, should have been left unnoticed at the end, as it were; that the great protest for which the astounding glare and glitter of the whole business had prepared us, should have been made, as it was made, to a quite uninterested world. But just as people will run away from a sermon when a great fire breaks out, so when that great French fire came, all Europe rushed away to look at it, and left the Pope high and dry in the Vatican.

But that proclamation of Infallibility was the last and at once the most logical and the most sublime protest of Sacerdotalism. That proclamation of the actual direct and exclusive guidance of the Head of the Church of God, is in perfect keeping with the whole theory of a priesthood; and, indeed, ought to have been made long since, to make the theory in all parts consistent. And for that theory there is, no doubt, much to be said; for it would be possible to do as Father Newman does:—so to push the contemplation of the miseries of

this world to its utmost, and so to make little of the order and beauty of it, as to come at length to the belief that either this is a disorganized world of devilry and given over to the devil, or that it is given to only one class, to win it, under God's guidance and leadership, from the devil. And having gone on this principle of magnifying evil and reducing good until one or another of these doctrines is forced upon us, we may end in preferring to believe that the great, wide, dreary sea may be only crossed in safety in one bark, which alone can land us at the desired haven.

On these grounds Sacerdotalism justifies itself; but since we cannot accept either the grounds or the doctrine resting upon them, we have to preach this great truth of Individualism. It is that which is the very soul of Protestantism. In the proclaiming of the open road between the soul and God, which none can bar or close, lies the one great glory of our office as Protestants. We stand now—we of these different faiths—as we have always stood, divided into two great camps of opposition. On the one hand are those who believe that apart from themselves there is an authority which must be listened to and yielded to, who believe that the safest way out of all struggles

of the soul with doubt lies in the surrendering of the soul to this outside authority, that its ways may be chosen for it, and its beliefs decided for it. And on the other hand, there is the camp of those who, knowing that the warfare of life must be for ever hard and the way of the soul mournful and difficult, stand there, sad but wisely valiant men, resolved to fight their own battles for themselves; knowing that in this world it is not given to men to be infallibly led, and unable to believe that God has given to any one man now a knowledge of things which He has not given to others the power to know. That which was spoken in the closet, is now proclaimed upon the housetops. And the warfare between these opposing camps must still go on, until there comes a still greater rending of the churches; until they stand even wider apart than they now do.

What you call Ritualism is involved in this, and on the settlement of that question much in the future of the English Church depends. Most men think that the question consists of vestments; but the battle is not fought about clothes of any kind or colour. A man may wear what colour he will to preach in, and I, for one, will promise to leave him alone on the matter. This battle is fought

between the priesthood and the people; between the old enemies, Sacerdotalism and that Individualism, which proclaims the nearness of the soul of any man to God, if that man so wills it, whether he be anointed, appointed, or elected by any pope, bishop, or synod, or whether he be known to none of them. This is the grand doctrine involved in this question of Ritualism.

Here, again, the reason of your misunderstanding the question, and allowing it to drift where it will without interference from you, is the result of the same lazy dislike to work, the same sad indifference to the polity of humanity, about the very roots of which this question is entwined.

It is the same, again, with respect to the education of the children of the country. You say, "What does it matter whether children get education at denominational schools or not?" It matters much; and there are some men, thank God! who know that there are principles so deeply true, and upon which the existence of this world so deeply rests, that even for such a cause as this they cannot depart from them.

The question is not one of denominational schools. It comes to this:—Shall the education of these children be given over to these priests, or shall the

laity undertake it? And the question must be understood as involving anew the old cause of warfare, as involving old principles for the supremacy of which all Europe has continually warred for centuries.

"It doesn't matter much about the children," you may say. I am willing to acknowledge that children have a very fine ability to throw off nonsense. But the question is, have the clergy, as clergy, and their satellites, as satellites of the clergy—beadles, churchwardens, sidesmen, and whatever other planets or asteroids may revolve about them—have they the claim to educate the people of the nation, to determine their faith and to decide their doctrine? They say they have. We, as usual, go against them. The claim to the education of the people should be entrusted to the people. We are fighting here the same battle they are fighting just now in France. And unless the fight be manfully fought, and unless the battle be won there, there is no further hope for France than that she will sink into the condition of a big Greece, or descend to the lamentable state from which Spain has not yet risen.

So we join the eternal protest against the clergy, not against the men whom we know and love, and

often admire, who are excellent in character and in life, diffusing throughout this country much that is sweet and godlike and noble; but against the clergy, as representatives of Sacerdotalism. We admit all you can say in their praise, but after that admission, the moment you ask for them one sacerdotal right, one rag of that old scarecrow of priestly authority, we draw out the old Puritan Excalibur, and arm ourselves for battle.

Thank God! there are some of us who love truth more than peace! And as for you who, growing impatient, cry, "This is a miserable squabble," we have only to tell you that your position as freemen is owing to these "squabbles" and their like; that the glories of this land are due to its noble "squabblers," who, in evil repute and good repute, have fought for the faith dear to them, and who have held truth so dear as to make even life of no account beside it.

Pardon me, therefore, if I speak strongly, and express my intense scorn of all those who are impatient of the disturbance which these great principles, as they flow onward, must make in their small pool or puddle. The tide runs into all creeks, be they large or small. This question of Sacerdotalism runs everywhere. The tide will rise,

It will disturb you in your little creek. That is not of much consequence! Remember that by the rise of the tide the freshness of the world is maintained.

Those, therefore, who feel as I do, and who rejoice in the fray as much as I do, look upon the battle which will now soon be ended, with great joy. We look at Rome, and whatever may be our own opinions concerning that wonderful-looking Italian king, we are glad to find him throned there. We are rejoiced to see him with the dictum of a layman turning out the priests. I had the good fortune to see them collected there in all their glory not long ago,* and now, since then, they have had to clear out and make way for a layman. Our side wins, and I am thankful. The leaven is at work. The laity have been vindicated. It is a bad time with the Pope. He thinks of leaving. He won't do it. He says he'll go. He knows better. Sacerdotalism has been sorely wounded. As for our part, we rejoice. I have had my share of the Pope's blessing, whatever good it may be to me, and I am sorry for his private misfortunes. But in the triumph of the principle for which all

* 1870.

my life long I have, according to my measure, struggled, I do rejoice, for all orders of Sacerdotalism group themselves around this great central principle. Therefore I rejoice at what appears to me its death-blow. I rejoice in the triumph of individuality which springs out of it.

And that principle has results outside the Church just as great, if not as startling, as within. For it is this which will one day be as fatal to kings and emperors as it has been to priests. And when I say that it will be fatal to emperors and kings I am not thinking about any monarchy like ours, under which we have all things that are essential (or almost all that are essential) to good government, but of tyrannies and oppressions which the spirit of the time will not allow to stand much longer. With a monarchy like ours no wise man troubles himself much about a republic, and will certainly not play monkey to any Frenchman who may grind the Marseillaise on his organ. What business is it of ours to go about with the French cry, in English streets, *Vive la Republique.* It is the working out of the great principle with which the wise man will trouble himself; and Englishmen never make a greater mistake than when they endeavour to settle English

liberty according to French models. I sometimes feel disgusted with my countrymen about this matter, and even sometimes, when I hear the wretched bands that go about the streets playing first the Old Hundredth and then the Marseillaise, and see people following them as though the ridiculous business had any political significance for them, I almost lose my temper. What have we to do with Phrygian caps of liberty and French hymnings of freedom? What have we to do with these pantomimic droppings of the French stage? The principle is not whether any country shall have at any moment a republic or a monarchy, but whether the nation shall be founded on its actual government by itself, freely and nobly, or whether it shall be ruled by a tyranny, meanly and cruelly.

The principle of Individualism is ultimately just as fatal to the king as it has always proved fatal to the priest.

The same leaven is trusted to do the work—and will do it. But it will do it never by revolution—always by evolution.

Let this principle ever be kept in the heart of a nation, and it will shew itself as inevitably in its government, as the constitution of a man will

determine his appearance, down to the flash of his eye and the colour of his hair. Hence I have an impatience of all the talk one sometimes hears of the danger of sudden changes. "Don't strive to bring about sudden changes." Nonsense! Did you ever suddenly change? All change in a nation, deep-rooted as this is, must be gradual, and the result of a natural growth. Those things which were evils in the beginning, and have been evils throughout, must be got rid of. And, depend upon it, they will be got rid of by a natural and healthy process—will be shaken off in the course of growth, which is the supreme condition of all things in this world. Let me give you, then, these few words of warning, lest, hearing the French cry got up, and the French music sung, you should be disposed to fall in with the crowd and keep step with them for a little while. Keep to the old camp and hold to the old principle, that is, the maintenance of the solemn rights of God, which will in time maintain the rights of Man in this world.

Now during the past year there has been one sublime and contemptible trial as to whether certain old dead principles are not again to be galvanized into life and action. For, though we are too near to understand that gigantic struggle,

and although the student of the future will look upon it, when it has fallen somewhat into perspective, with clearer eyes than ours, we should be untrue to the great principles we have just been professing, if we did not call your attention just now to the attempted establishment of a Commune in France—the greatest insurrection the world has ever seen. For it was an insurrection,—not only armed, and for a short time, not only with principles of government, but with forms of government, and with the *ultima ratio* of kings, the power to enforce its decrees. That its methods and deeds were mistaken and evil, we know. For one of the great blunders of the Commune was the great evil into which men are continually falling when they think that an outward change can give a vital reform.

How have men always misunderstood this! You remember when the abolition of the corn-laws was being advocated, one of the arguments was, that if you did away with them you would do away with pauperism. Well, how has that worked? There are no corn-laws now, but there are a few paupers about. The causes of pauperism lie in the faults of human nature, and until those faults are cured, pauperism will exist, corn-laws or no corn-laws.

The mending of a road and the filling up of a puddle or two in it, and the abolishing of a turnpike, never made men travel upon it yet, if it leads to nowhere. And yet when there is a change of politics proposed in this country, its foes howl and its friends shout about equal nonsense. That the repeal of the corn-laws must of necessity prevent the existence of paupers, was as great nonsense as ever was spoken. By clearing the road you give a better chance to those who travel thereon, but this is all you can fairly claim.

So, with regard to the Commune, there was an attempt to overcome a Law of this world. You see good men stand up sometimes to say that a community of riches would be a fine thing. I think not. Who wants to sit side by side with a lazy scoundrel, and see him eat as much as the industrious? I have no interest in any arrangement of society which shall enable the idle and vagabond to fare as pleasantly as the worthy and industrious. That the sick, the wounded, the aged, and the helpless shall still be cared for with the largest pity, we are all willing and even anxious. But that the stout and lazy vagabond has any right to our tenderness, we deny: that an arrangement should be made by which all who have no

talent for work should be able to get along without it,—we have no anxiety that this should come to pass. May I rest in my quiet grave before that Paradise of sneaks, snobs, and impostors exists in England. If that is the New Jerusalem, wipe my name out of its citizenship!

So far, then, as the Commune sought to bring about this condition of things,—so far as it attempted to make all smooth for the unworthy, and to give plenty to the idle,—so far it was a blunder. But inasmuch as it was a solemn protest against the old political programme of France, one could lay it to heart. For, the great questions which will trouble our children are mainly those which the Commune attempted so foolishly to solve.

You know the old political programme, for which our forefathers struggled, has been gained. There is nothing left which the old Radicals asked for with the exception of that little bit of carpentry, the Ballot Box. And when the "working man" walks away with that little bit of furniture under his arm, he will have gotten all his Radical fathers fought for.

And now that the old programme is fulfilled and the old wants are satisfied, a new programme is being presented.

In this world there is never to be peace, until He comes whose right it is to reign.

It is the same Individualism rising up, hot, impatient, eager to justify itself and its claims, and to make itself and its just desires acknowledged. It is precisely the same principle, but now it takes other questions in hand. Is it the eternal and necessary constitution of things in this world, it asks, that there should always be two classes, one unwholesomely rich and the other miserably poor? Is it necessary that these conditions should exist for ever, that there should always be Dives and always Lazarus? Some men think it is not necessary, and the next thirty or forty years of European history will be mainly occupied with the strife on that question. It has entered into the heads of working men, who are beginning to think that perhaps three days a week might suffice for men who are all their lives long doomed to work in a coal mine: that three days in the week is enough of that insupportable labour! It is a question of the length of work and the relation of work to wages, and the question as to whether one side shall always come in for the lion's share of labour, and the other for the lion's share of capital. You can't help these questions coming. They belong

to the epoch. And when you say, "Why, these people are at it again; they're never contented; the other day they wanted something or other, and now they want nine hours, and in a year or two they'll be wanting eight," you might understand that beforehand. Of course they will be wanting eight.

My friend, if you had had the good fortune to have been born into this world of England some centuries earlier, you would have been a "born thrall"—a serf. You would have been cowhided, my respectable middle-class citizen! And your broad back, and your not very exuberant brain, would have made a most admirable churl of you. Your forefathers fought that out for you.

No, you cannot prevent these questions from rising. They are inevitable. They will have way. The battle is perpetual, being fought on one question or another. Now we are taking women away from painful labour, and giving them the first possibility of chastity and beauty. Here one day we plead for the factory lad, and one day for the education of the children of the streets and alleys; now for the negro, now for the man overtoiled, and now for the man underpaid.

Let me warn you, that to the end of the chapter,

to the end of the story of humanity, that awful Christ shall stand and plead; wherever there is an iniquity there shall be a shaking of the heavens and the earth. There will be no peace in my day. As long as there is any leaven left and any meal unleavened the turmoil must go on. There will be no peace in my day, and I am rejoiced to know it.

I need not go further into this matter of the proclamation by Christ and the reproclamation by Man of the individualism of the individual, of the private right of the conscience. That this is the true interpretation of Scripture with relation to the spiritual, social, and political relation of Man to this world and its Maker, we are most of us convinced.

The action of the two other principles, the hope of the Eternal Life and the responsibility of Man to God, need scarcely so much to be dwelt upon, though they too have given men a noble spirit in politics. And when you hear, as you probably will before the day is out, "Oh, it's all very fine, but you and I are better out of all the political ferment," think of these things and say, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" Don't listen to that speech. Who does, for this generation, any little service, helps the

next. If the child of the future comes into this world in better condition than we have done, by the measure of his larger advantage shall our work be judged.

That God may give you the old public virtue of the Christian, a passionate love of your nation, and a desire that all men may know Him upon whom alike the hope of nations and of men depends, is my prayer.

There will be wars and rumours of wars in your time and mine. No peace as long as we shall live, or for years after. And better, we say, the noble stir of this life than any inglorious and indolent ease—better, we say, with Tennyson,

"Better fifty years of Europe, than a cycle of Cathay."

Better the stir of European life for fifty years, than the long droning, dreary periods of Oriental history, where there is no chronology worth having because there is no great and good thing to date from.

OUR WORK IN THIS WORLD.

"And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger."—LUKE xvii. 15–18.

ONE of the abiding sorrows of those who feel strongly that Christianity sets forth the real work a man has to do in this world, is the apparent inadequacy of anything he can do to realize its aim or to bring about its spirit.

The same sorrow haunts men in all places. "Lord, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him?" The body of man set against the soul in all its glorious wants and powers: life in its threescore years and ten against the life that is promised.

"What are these among so many?"

These words set forth the feeling with which the

thoughtful man often regards the world, and thinks of the Christian's work of duty in it. The more strongly he feels and sees that which is right in theory, the more keenly will he feel that which is wrong in practice. The larger he sees the glory of the eternal years to be, the more will he see the pitifulness of the earthly years. And if he is a reformer, as he is likely to be if he is a thoughtful man (for no man who is not a reformer deserves to be called much of a man), he will feel these claims all the more sadly. The feeling of every such man is that with which the disciples looked at the loaves and fishes set by Christ before the multitude:—"What are they among so many?" What can one do against all this sin and suffering, —of what avail is our work?

And this is a sorrow which it is impossible to get fully cured; and a trouble which is not altogether lamentable to man. The sensitiveness of the eyes may bring pain, but woe to the eyes from which all sensibility is gone.

But these feelings are not to be encouraged. They always lead to a foolishness of method in life. An impatience of the body because it is not the soul; an impatience of this world because it is not the next;—these, by the discontented spirit

which they engender, bring forth all manner of mischief. It was from this impatience of the world and the flesh, that the practice of self-torture and self-mortification arose. All true mortification has a something noble to justify it, some resultant in the benefit of mankind.

Looking at the life of Christ, I have no doubt you have been struck, at times of thought, with the care and love which he gave to the doing of things which were, after all, small and temporal in themselves. He raised from the dead men whom the grave would once more claim; he gave health that was sure to go away again. He spent a life in works of good, which, to the great mass of misery about him, were but as a drop in the ocean.

Yet, thinking of this, and contrasting what he did do with what we can do, we proclaim that our best works are but vanity, and are less than nothing.

Now at first, considering the ends for which Christ came into the world, we might judge this temporary work unnecessary; and reasoning from this, in the narrow spirit into which we are sometimes tempted, we should let such matters alone. There has been an inclination among some Christian people to make light of sublunary things;

to set their affections so entirely on things above, as to forget the duties of this life below. They look with so great an admiration at the glory of the heavens, that they forget the needy meanness of the earth whereunto they should minister; and hence grows, oftentimes, an impatience which leads them to despise the little work they could do if they would.

Christ came to show to the world the glories of eternity; yet, to the thankless he performed the commonest good services of humanity. He blessed men without even asking their gratitude; and in the case of these ten whom he healed, the gratitude of one is held up as a marvel and a rarity, an eccentricity and a wonder.

There stands the Exemplar of mankind, showing that no man can be justified in the neglect of everyday human work, or set free from the constantly recurring claim of human misery. The Christian can in no way more completely disown his Master, than by shirking this work, and then calling his cowardice "spiritual-mindedness." No man has a right to live a life of self-absorption, or to allow a feeling of contempt for the doings of this life to grow out of his longing for the next. For this, a man has no warrant; and against

it, the whole example of Christ stands as a perpetual protest.

Now, I want to know, of what use you are in the world; what you do for it, and how you justify your presence in it? Many of you do nothing. Either the work of this life is to you so little as not to be worth doing at all, or you are too big to stoop from your height of spiritual contemplation to do it.

There are two reasons for this neglect of duty:—one, a shrinking from the greatness of the work, and the other, an affectation of superiority to the divine methods. There is no worse thing in effect, than that cant of spirituality which leads men to abstain from the world's politics under the pretence that they belong to the New Jerusalem. There are things in this Old Jerusalem which need attending to. The service of humanity is the one great, grand qualification of that membership of the New Jerusalem of which these people talk so often.

Now, suppose I take one of you, and tell him, "I can't see of what use you are in the world; I can't see what right you have to be in it." He will probably tell me, "I work hard." "Well, I suppose you eat much, and so make up for that?"

"Well," he says, "I do my work; I am always at it; it takes up my time very fairly." "But what do you work *for?* What do you do which affects anything above and beyond yourself? What do you do daily to lessen the great sum of human misery? What souls have you gladdened? What sad hearts have you lightened?" "The poor are so ungrateful," say you. "Well, don't stop for gratitude, and don't look too closely for results. Work, and leave the end to God; as Christ did for the world, healing the sick who blessed him not, raising Lazarus from the tomb, knowing that he must soon go there again; doing the lowliest things, while preaching the loftiest; living at once a life of holiest longing and of constant endeavour."

From that divine method I know no rule of exemption; from the divine injunction I know no way of escape. Here is One, then, who, filled with the loftiest ideas, would yet bend down to the everyday work of humanity without disgust; would go about doing work with an increasing constancy and patience, knowing that time would undo most of it, but content to work his work and to leave the end to God. For even the works of Christ have that melancholy mark of time; and so far

as we can trace them, they fell into the great ocean of human misery, and were lost there.

So, in sight of this example, a man finds himself forced to say, "I have a work to do in the world, though it is so small, so poor, so pitifully inadequate to the world's requirements, that it seems almost like one drop of water put upon the tongue of a man with a raging fever to quench his thirst, a mockery and an aggravation." Why Christ should have undertaken this work, knowing that it could be no more than temporary in its action, it would not be easy to understand, if we did not clearly see that it was intended to stand before us as an example. This seemingly inadequate work, this blessing which could not endure, this life of lofty aim and lowly duty—all these were intended slowly to conquer by example the contempt of man for such small, good works as are possible for him.

The offer made by the devil to Christ was, that he should take this world on this world's principles. Christ rejected the kingdoms of the earth so offered, and elected to win them on his own principles. Rejecting them when offered by the untrue, he claims them on his own true ground, and gains them.

Hence, then, I find that some of the difficulties which have always perplexed men, which are as old as Christianity itself, are capable of something like a solution.

You know that in one sense it is impossible to live in society and to conform to the laws of life laid down by Christ.

You know what I mean by society.

Not the set of silly idlers who fancy that they, living in an exclusive circle and occupying themselves in doing nothing as gracefully as may be, may count themselves the cream of the cream, and the essence of humanity. They are the little butterflies of the summer air. They have little claim to set themselves down as the choicest of humanity: there is not much harm in them; their spots are curious; they are very pretty to look at; but they have small knowledge of the great world outside them, and are but a small portion of society.

By society I mean the great world built up in art, politics, and poetry; the people of the world who do the great world's business,—banking, trading, marrying;—out of all which I can go, if I like, into a convent, but out of which I have no desire to go.

Now the question rises, How can you regulate the everyday doings of this world by the doctrine of Christianity? What can you do with the Sermon on the Mount and modern society? Where do you find in Christian teaching room for War? "Well," you may say, "I give War up." Then where do you find in Christian teaching room for Law? "Well, I give Law up." Where do you find room in that teaching for Wealth? You won't give up that, I know. You go to the bank and you store up money there; you take thought for the morrow. I don't say there is any harm in it, but it is difficult to explain it, to show that Christian men are right in doing that which the Christian Gospel apparently forbids. It is no more than prudential to lay up money; it has become a necessity of the society in which we move.

But if the teaching of the New Testament remain the doctrine by which we are still to be guided in our lives, there would seem no remedy but to invite the Shaker elder to dwell amongst us, and to teach us how quickly we can stagnate society, and put an end to the human race at large. What other choice is left us? We live in the midst of a society based upon these things; we

cannot get rid of them. Should we reject them, there would be nothing for us but to get away into some wilderness, and there die out as speedily as possible, and let the old world go—to the devil's music—to its proper place.

These difficulties are generally met by a talk about figurative language. Figurative language! This language of figures is the only one in which an earnest man can fitly speak. These figures are like figures in arithmetic, they mean something. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven." That is a figure, but it means something. It is because it is so true that it is hard for a man to shake off the influence of wealth, and walk straightly under the great load of earthly prosperity, that this is so figurative. The language of figures is the only language of passion, and the stronger the figure, if a wise man speak, the stronger the meaning intended. So instead of saying, "It is only a figure," you may accept that which is spoken in figures by the wise as being intended to carry a deeper meaning.

The strength of language with which Christ speaks should be taken as indicative of strength of feeling. You may say, if you will, that it is

exaggerative; but there is a sense in which exaggeration is the truest method of speaking. If you have nine sheep and say you have ten, it is an exaggeration which becomes a simple lie; but if, speaking of your nine sheep, you go off into hyperbole and proclaim them the finest sheep in the world, if you say, "Their fleece is whiter than snow, and their flesh is as marrow," it is only an offspring of your imagination, and is not to be blamed. If you exaggerate in a question of arithmetical extent, you degenerate into falsehood; if in an enthusiasm of admiration you exaggerate as to quality, it is no more than we should expect, and is no more than is quite natural in man.

I need not point out to you the endless doubt into which you may be plunged by accepting the teaching of the New Testament, and contrasting it with the doings of men who strive to follow its precepts.

Read, as I have said, the Sermon on the Mount, and compare it with modern society; or take a turn at St. Peter—

"Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel,"

and then hold up that marvellous pearl necklace

of yours to the light and look at it! It may not be a very gorgeous or a very valuable affair, but look at it! I have often wondered what women do with their jewel-boxes after reading St. Peter. Or when a man puts the rifle on his shoulder and goes off to practise the manœuvres of warfare! I can scarcely fancy such an institution as the gospel rifleman! Or when a man goes to the bank, or to the stock exchange—does he fulfil the gospel teaching? I can scarcely fancy any of the Apostles at the stock exchange unless it were Judas. If you accept the old saying, "Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil," what becomes of the conversation of mankind and the great flow of literature? In short—what becomes, in the face of gospel teaching, of the whole framework of social life, of art, and literature, and science?

But the Gospel of Christ was meant to teach something higher than the ways of the world; and yet to be in the world, and to do its work: and Christ himself, whilst preaching the glories of the kingdom of God, and the splendours of the eternal years, was yet content to be in the streets of old Jerusalem, to sit at meat with Zaccheus, and to

endure the judgment of Pilate; knowing that it is only by contact with men that men can be moved, and trusting, by his example, slowly and surely to raise them to a higher level; and knowing that so, at last, by force of loving the world, and living in it, and leavening it with unselfishness, the old plague of sin should be driven from it, and the whole earth should become glorified.

It is not because the Church has fallen away from the teaching of Christianity, but because the condition of things has changed, that we find the doings of Christian people, and the New Testament precepts of Christian life, so much at variance. I read these strong statements made by Christ, and I find them out of date. They, too, had their years of truth, and their time of need, and have grown to be true or necessary no longer. It was one of Christ's offices so to leaven society by the gift of his grace and precepts, that it should slowly outgrow the old state and the old necessities of the law. Society is now allowed to use things which in those early days it could not employ with safety.

"But this," you may say, "is only getting out of the difficulty." Just so. I prefer to get out of it in this way; I must get out of it that way, or I

must perish; I must get out of it that way, or stand still in it,—and die. I believe that society has got through its childhood, and can walk without needing those safeguards any longer. I believe that it has God for its author, as much as the Bible.

Here, then, arises a difficulty.

Society is of God's ordination, and the Bible is God's word; yet they seem to be antagonistic. This seeming antagonism comes purely from the change in the order of the world since the Bible was written.

In the early days of the Christian Church it was necessary to come out from the old world, and in numberless things it was absolutely required that the disciples should sever themselves completely from the world's doings. Although even then, in some cases, the early Christians found a difficulty in going to a feast; because the whole thing was so mixed up with the worship of the false gods, that it was almost impossible to go to it without identifying themselves with idolatry; yet, when they asked the Apostle if they should go, he told them that they could go, if they went merely to the feast, and not to the idolatrous ceremony. If they could separate the two, and go to the feast

as merely a feast, it was all right, and they might go without damage.

But the whole of the old-world life was so mixed up with the Grecian mythology and the old gods of Greece, that there was found nothing for it but to come out of the whole business.

This new society came to cleanse, beautify, and sanctify the rest; and has, at least so far, done its work, that much that was necessary for it, has ceased to be necessary for us. Hence we are no longer guided in the minutiæ of life or worship by the old precepts. If a man comes and asks me, "Do you think they sang anthems in the early Church?" I tell him, "No, I don't think they did." "Then," says he, "if the early Church did not, why do you?" I reply, "I am not the early Church." You might as well ask me why I wear a beard, because you know I didn't when I was a boy. The beard came with manhood, and the anthems with the manhood of the Church. I fulfil the divine order, and let nature take her own great course. We have got, in the Church, beyond the scant growth of those beardless days. You may tell me, if you choose, "They were the best days." I think they were not. You may as well say that at its rise, in a tiny spring of water, is the great

and palmy day of the River. That great day comes when, after rolling through wide tracts of land, and being fed by innumerable streams, it widens with volume and depth till it becomes like the ocean into which it is to fall.

To give up the claim we make for progress, to say that we have fallen away from the spirit of the Christian life, is a treason and a treachery to the great principles of that government of God, by which we maintain that we are guided and guarded.

Hence, I believe that there are things which the early Christian was bound not to do, but which the later Christian is bound to do. The old form of Christianity has gone out to give way to another, which is higher, nobler, and better. The old Christian I admire; but I am a modern Christian myself. The same spirit of truth should run into the Christianity of this day which ran into that of old days.

For, above all, the Christian religion should become the very groundwork and framework of society. If it is to do any good work at all, it must be this: it must aim to get at the root of all the doings of society.

Hence, we have changed with respect to de-

fensive war, and in this respect departed from the strict theory of the New Testament. I have no difficulty at all about that matter. Defensive war has been taken by the Christian, and baptized into a Christian duty.

So, to lay up money, to be careful of it, to invest it with an eye to legitimate profit, and to use that profit when obtained for honest uses, has become a Christian duty. The apostle saw this when he said—

> "Provide things honest in the sight of all men."

And again—

> "Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men."

But this difficulty will meet us again and again, and the struggle between the old and new forms of life will be again and again renewed. If the difficulty comes back too powerfully, I simply shut my eyes and do the duty that lies before me. You may do wrong in living in the society of men, living there without doing anything; but you cannot do wrong in doing kindly. We can still humbly strive, through all perplexity, to follow in the steps of our great Master, who, preaching the loftiest things, did the lowliest; who, Son of God and heir

of eternity, came into this world and lived in this poor thing called Time—lived in it, loved it, and blessed it; who, whilst he told men that there was but one thing they had which was worth caring for,—the soul, yet healed the sick in body, and fed the hungry.

The bringing of the world to Christ is the chief object aimed at by the Christian life, and this can never be attained except by following the divine example, and mixing with the world. It is possible to be a Christian, and yet to look with a fine inconsiderateness on the result of your own Christian work. Bless the ten, though only one of their number come back to bless you in return.

So we come back to the point from which we started. In what way are you imitative of Christ? In what way is your Christianity entirely free from selfishness? The Christian man is bound to have some work in participation with his Master, and the Christian soldier, though continually enjoined to be at war with the world, should be at peace with the people therein, and helpful to the needy among them. He even has hopes that by-and-by the world shall come out of the sphere of warfare, and shall need to be fought no longer. But at present there are evils which need stout fighting on

our part to hold them back, and we ask you to perform just now a Christian duty.

The exercise of Christian charity, by which at this time I mean the act of almsgiving, should be physically and intellectually a pleasant thing; but I have heavy fears that to many of you it is not. Some of you would be a great deal more shocked at missing prayer than at missing almsgiving. I have been grieved at some of you when I have heard you say, "They are always collecting there."

Always!

I wish it were literally true. I wish we were always collecting. Want and disease collect without pause; they collect the woman and the child, the old and the feeble, the young and the helpless; and every day misery sends round its awful bag. Want, disease, and misery collect their victims daily, and carry them out into the nameless depths.

If people were wise and true-hearted they would need no summons to charity. I believe in the plan adopted by those whom it is the fashion to call High Churchmen, who have an offertory at every time of worship. That was St. Paul's notion, and it was the right and true one. I have no great faith in a congregation which leaves nothing when

it has gone but the odour of its presence. We should keep up every day a constant effort of good, in order to meet the constancy of evil.

We ask you, therefore, those of you who cannot do anything personally in this fight with evil, whose time is occupied, and righteously occupied, in the business affairs of life, to give, at all events, with a liberal hand. I wish you knew the deep truth of the old words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

I have known one or two men to whom it was as great a pleasure to pay what they owed as it was to receive what was owing to them. But I have only known one or two men of that character; they are not, unhappily, to be very often met with. Nowadays a very bad fashion exists. When a tradesman has supplied you with goods which you have eaten, or used, or worn, you expect him to come like a beggar to your door to ask for that which you ought to have sought him out to pay.

But you who spend your lives in getting, do you ever think of the blessedness of giving? Anything can get: a sponge is good at getting. But in giving there is a fulness of life: there is the stretched-out hand and the bountiful heart. He who gives most is the divinest of men; he who

has most to give is nearest the gods. Christ, who, above all, gave that he had in richness and in fulness, did good continually, asking not whether those whom he blessed were thankful or forgetful.

Let us strive to imitate him in so doing. What matter that the poor are ungrateful? We ask not their gratitude, but are content with the blessings of God in our own increased richness of heart, and our greater readiness to give yet more.

This act of loving charity should be looked upon as a part of divine worship. If you omit anything in Christian worship, let it not be this essential part. Better leave God unpraised than Man unblest. How can you love Him Whom you have not seen, if you love not your brother whom you have seen?

It is unfair on your part to complain of our making frequent collections here. What do you want? If we don't come to you, we know very well that you will not come to us. If ever men come to understand the true chivalry of life, there will be no need to make an appeal of this sort; there will be something left for the poor when the feast is over. A kindly man ever thinks of the little dog, and gathers the scraps of the feast for him. He who makes a feast for the Master will please him best

if he let the poor have the glorious fragments, that nothing be lost.

Our fathers had a fable that, where the rainbow touched the earth, there was a crock of gold, which whosoever found was happy. That was but a fable; but we know that wheresoever the rainbow of Charity touches the earth, there rests God's blessing.

This is a day with us when you will have an opportunity of exercising that Christian grace of Charity. Remember, he who loves Man most, loves God most. The service of suffering humanity is the service of God, and brings with it the blessing of God.

ENDURANCE OF TEMPTATION.

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed."—JAMES i. 12–14.

FOR several weeks we have been looking into the history of what is called "our ghostly enemy," and I have stopped purposely at the very point where, had I gone further, I should have saved you trouble, and been myself a sort of court, a referee for the lazy; a determiner of those things which you all ought to determine for yourselves. For long experience teaches me, that with the majority of people, there is nothing they like more than to have their thinking done for them. Just as they go into a court of justice for a verdict, so they go to their preacher, and adopt as their own whatever conclusions he may come to.

But their faith speedily dies, having no root in them. It is like the seed that the Lord described, which came up quickly, and withered away as soon. These are what are called a man's "opinions," or, to use the usual theological slang, "views." What are your "views" worth, pray? They are usually like a portfolio of "views" which a man has somewhere safely put away; he has forgotten them, he never looks through them; he neither beholds them, nor is beholden to them.

It is not for me to come to a conclusion and then give it to you, lazily to hang round your neck and call your own. It is for me to provoke thought and study and inquiry, and, when you have worked for it, the conclusion gained will belong to you; but if you simply carry it away after once hearing or twice, it will soon be forgotten.

I have, however, warned you that the subject of the Personality of Satan, lying in the region of the Abstract, is of no mortal consequence to any man, that I can make out. For if I believe in his personality, it does not increase his power. The temptations of my life are independent of him, for they are home-made.

So, passing from that, let us examine the manly utterance of that strong, big-headed, robust, sen-

sible man, called the Apostle James, who seems to have had a singular liking for putting his finger on facts; who looked upon all moonshine and mystery as a tradesman looks upon money, and gives it a ring to see if it is true.

This great, wise man lays down a law regarding temptation, which may be of service to us.

But before we enter upon the consideration of the statement, let us hope that you have got to one of the first Strengths of Wisdom. For we should go "from strength to strength;" that is, from one fortress to another, from one place of refuge to another. Now, one strength of wisdom which we should come to is to understand that a man has no enemy, and can have no enemy, seen or unseen, except himself; that all outer things which are called enemies, are called so for the convenience of speech, rather than from their reality. It is said of men who never have a penny to spend upon their families, but have plenty to spend upon their own amusements, "He is no man's enemy but his own." So, in another sense, it may be said of each of you that you have no enemy but yourself, and I trust you are no man's enemy but your own.

If you doubt it, go back to the days of your

childhood, and think of what happened in your school-days. When I was at school, I used to think that the master was my enemy. I looked upon him rather as a disagreeable jailor. I found that he was my master, and that I was expected to be his servant. He was everlastingly making rules, and he very quietly told me that it was my duty to obey them. And my spirit used to rise against this.

Now, was not this the state of many of you, when you were at school? And yet in this school, which was meant as a place where character was to be trained—the master sitting there armed, able if necessary to bestow pain as well as pleasure—this man meant well; he was a part of life's discipline. We had our little revolutions at times, you know, and we rose in rebellion. But by-and-by, as we get wise with the sadnesses of life, we look back upon those times, and find that the schoolmaster was our servant, and that the man we looked upon simply as a tyrant who ruled us according to his own will, was really striving to serve us, and to do us good; that he had no enmity against us, but that we were enemies to ourselves, and that it was resistance to his will which did us mischief.

There are times when a child sits down to his tasks as to an apparatus of torture. We have had earthly fathers who have chastened us after their pleasure; but we have found out that even their chastening, though grievous to be borne, has been good in its fruit.

Now, in all life's crosses and sins and troubles, are you still looking upon them as you did upon the school, as though all things were hostile to you? Or have you discovered, by long experience, that nothing outside a man is the enemy of a man, or ever can be? That pain and sickness, sorrow and death, have no sting in themselves—all are friends? That all the trials and distresses of life are but a dictionary by which a man learns wisdom, slowly turning up the words of life; that they are but the dictionary of God, out of which we are to work our exercises, blundered over, corrected, and, it may be, wept over? So you find out—at least, I have done—that we have no enemy but ourselves; that we have always been our own worst foes, because we would not or could not see that all these things worked together for good.

Then we come to the second Strength of Wisdom. We have found that no man has any enemy but himself; but by-and-by we come to see that no

man has ever suffered anything that was really, essentially, internally evil, except from himself.

Now, of course, you and I are given to complaining. Well, the wounded beast will cry. You say you have suffered so much pain from other people. You cannot suffer from anybody; it is not in their power to make you suffer. You cannot hurt me, if I do not allow myself to be hurt.

One great thing that a child should be made to understand is this: that temptation never puts sin into his mind; it only makes the sin that is in him manifest. In vain the spark, if there is naught inflammable about. In vain the tempter, if there be no foe within. The citadel of the soul would hold out for ever against all the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, were it not too desirous to be led away captive by the world's pomps and vanities, the lusts of the flesh, and the desire of the eyes.

Therefore I declare unto you, none of you can have any sin put into you by temptation. Temptation simply shows the evil that was in you, waiting an opportunity to come out. As to the notion that our adversary, the devil, puts evil thoughts into our minds, I say that neither God nor devil can do more than stir and move the thoughts

already there. I can hear words, but they will have no power over me, unless the thought is in myself. You say, "I was so tempted, and I fell." The truth is, you, being bad, were tempted; you showed the badness that was in you.

First, then, you have no enemy but yourself; and secondly, no temptation can hurt you, unless you give it room. No man and no power of nature need be looked upon as an enemy: the plague, the pestilence, the storm,—these are not enemies; they cannot touch my inner life, unless I myself make them a cause of offence. Nor need any human being in the world do me any harm; men do but call out into action or into notice the evil that was in before. There are some things that are sore temptations to you, which are not so in the slightest to me; I have no weak place just there; but, in another place—ah! there touch me, and I feel the temptation at once. So Achilles was dipped in the water and made invulnerable in all parts except one; where the finger and thumb held the heel, it was dry, and, though the arrows glanced off from all other parts, when they pierced this one soft place, he was wounded—unto death!

Therefore we see the need of regeneration which shall so change the nature of a man that the world

shall be to him as naught, the flesh trampled down as St. George trampled down the Dragon, and the devil regarded as a "Peradventure."

Let us see the eternal things of the soul set forth by Christ. Satan is said to have taken Christ into the wilderness and there tempted him; he held up the world, he offered it to him to rule over and to be king of. Christ saw it with all its pomps and vanities, its kings and its honours,—it was no temptation to him. He turned away; there was nothing in him that answered to that, or made him wish for it. His mind was set on nobler things; on the building of character, not palaces; on the beauties of doing good to others, not on gorgeous robes and earthly regal honours. Just before his death, Christ gave the whole history of his calmness under temptation.

"The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."

The Law of Moses taught only the retribution of vengeance for injury. It was the stony wall that returned a soulless echo. A blow—a blow again. Tooth—tooth. An eye for an eye. The echo can only give back that which was given.

But when Christ came! Listen to the difference! He was reviled—he blessed! Crucified—

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!"

"Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you."

These are the precepts of the new law. No more echoing. Strike as you will, sweet music is the answer.

We have sometimes seen it stated in scientific books, without sufficient limitation and explanation, that "like cause produces like consequence." This is not true, as you find it sometimes baldly affirmed. If you strike one man, he may curse you and strike back; if you strike another, he will be silent; if you strike another, he will give you back a blessing. The blow was the same in all these three cases. How different the consequence!

The causes of temptation are often very small, but if you have in you the answer to them, they may lead you to show the large amount of evil that was within, ready to be let loose at any moment when you are touched in the weak place. If the bell be perfect and well made, wherever you touch, and however you strike it, music will be the answer; be the touch soft or the blow hard, with a wooden hammer or with a metal tongue, the sound

will be lovely and will charm us. But, if there be a hair's-breadth of a flaw, no music can come from it. Instead of concord, we have discord; and whether the angels try it, or even the finger of God do touch it, the sound is harsh and discordant. A man should be as a well-tuned stringed instrument; the rough wind may blow, and sweet music only is heard from it, though the great ships be torn and wrecked and lost, by the same storm of wind.

You see that it is necessary very carefully to consider the condition of that upon which cause is operative. The form of the consequence depends entirely upon it.

Now, therefore, instead of running about in a cowardly way, complaining of how you are tempted, you had better say that you had a chance to go wrong, and there was a great deal of evil in you which you had a chance to gratify, and you did so. "But," you say, "I feel myself beset." Do you? Do you want any more temptation outside yourself? *I* don't! This eternal battle between the wretched lusts of the body and the higher laws of the soul, this sublime fasting that is laid upon all men—oh, it is battle enough! temptation enough! God made this world so luscious sweet, but Man

has made it so terribly mischievous. There is enemy enough.

Seeing, then, that there is this lust within a man, he, being lustful, is tempted.

There is the tragedy! "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright." What a description! How that man must have seen the wine glowing with colour; must have tasted its sweetness; must have seen the golden sunshine falling upon the ruby wine, "blood-red;" must have held it up, and looked through it, until its lustrous colour became an enticement, a temptation!

Then is the time to empty the cup! Dash it down! for there is that within thee will turn that ruby wine into destruction! There is that within a man which, except for the divine power of fasting, would lead him utterly astray.

"Art thou a man given to appetite? put a knife to thy throat." Why? Because if you are given to appetite, to the glories of eating (for it is a pleasure, I grant), there is in thee a mean baseness and lowness that shall sink thy besotted soul into gluttony. "Put a knife to thy throat." We don't want a devil. In the very pleasures of life there is

tragedy enough. It is because they be so lovely that we have not the power of Lenten abstinence from them, and we cannot resist.

Now, because it happens to be Lent, do some of you abjure the pomps and vanities of this world? I have been in churches, and have heard some people renouncing the pomps and vanities of life who never had any to renounce. Some of them seemed to me as though they had never known anything but dry crusts. Yet, dear hearts! perhaps to them these were pomps and vanities. For who shall say what are pomps and vanities? To the little child, a few pieces of broken coloured glass are sufficient to lead him away from the schoolmaster to rebellion and truancy.

But are the pomps and vanities of the world thine enemies? They may or may not be, according to what is in thee. One man shall walk through Vanity Fair, like poor Christian of old, and shall keep himself unspotted; and another, amid the temptations of life, shall make a merchandise of honour. Thus we see them every day. Two men shall be in the same house of business; both are tempted, yet only one shall fall; they are both surrounded with the same things, yet only one has that within him which shall make him a

prey to them. One shall pass through, unstained in honour; but the other shall fall, being like Judas, a thief by nature and character. The thief shall put into his pouch, under the pretence of charity, that which he has abstracted by selfishness; but the other,—pitch shall not defile him, and not even so much as the smell of fire shall be upon his garments.

Thus, then, things may tempt or not, according to what is in you; and it is an idle dream, or a drivelling subterfuge, for people to say that they are tempted by the devil. It does not require a devil to tempt you. The smallest thing can tempt. As poor John Bunyan said once, something kept tempting him to sell Christ. If he stooped to pick up a pin, the voice said, "Sell him for that! sell him for that!" And men sell their honour for things as cheap. A pin will do it; a sweet smile; a fair face; the ruby wine; the love of money. Ah! for what has not a man sold his soul!

It does not need the evil power of the master of hell to get round you to make you fall. Let you alone, and you will do it. For a small thing you will fall, for in you are the conditions of falling. Here, for a garter, a man will sell his honour; and there, for a bribe, a statesman will sell his name.

Here, for the pitiful pleasure of a moment, a man may injure his soul more than he could be injured by others through many years. It is not hell and devils; it is that which is within me, that I need to fear.

I know not whether body and soul be all one, as some say they are; whether it be possible that my brain-cells and my imagination be all the same; but I do wish one's brain would contrive to move harmoniously. The imagination of a man's brain may be produced by phosphorus; I know not; but I wish it would contrive to keep itself going, without this eternal battle of mean things against lofty ones, and this perpetual bringing down to meanness! You may call it the devil, phosphorus, particles of brain, what you please; but there is this battle, and here it remains. Man may be nothing but so much carbon, if you like,—a radish with a curiously carved head, if you please to say so; but he has got to pass through this world and fight a fight on which depends his eternal happiness or misery.

Our "ghostly enemy," as he is called, lives at home in the brain, and has his place in the heart; and the great problem of life is, Why is it so?

I don't know. I give it up.

But let every one of you so strive, amid these conflicting powers, that you may give the victory to those you know to be best.

Now, all that is very simple. Perhaps some of you think it is much too simple for your dignity. Ah! it is the one thing in life to be understood.

Simple, is it? Not so. To be transformed into the spirit of Christ, until that which formerly would have brought forth from you the blow and cursing, shall bring forth instead—

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

To so work upon that which cause finds to act on, that the consequences shall be divine! This is not simple, or easy!

Before Man becomes divine, he produces undivine things; but after he becomes divine, even a blow will bring forth sweetness, forgiveness, divineness. Therefore it is well to ponder upon this: that nowhere does event correspond to cause, but that it always depends upon the nature of the substance that is acted upon. And you should not suffer yourselves to forget that.

I would that some of you would think it worth while to make it plain to your children, that although every cause has a consequence which

cannot be avoided, yet the form of that consequence depends upon the condition of the thing acted on. If the heart is musical, it is hard to get anything but music out of it. Take a sweet bell and touch it, so,—the ear is enraptured. Put a metal tongue within it and ring it; the sound is lovely. It is so well made, so flawless in its nature, that it is impossible to strike it without sweet music as the result; but let there come a "little rift within the lute," one hair's-breadth of crack, and, though the gods should kiss it, there would be nothing but harshness from it.

So, if you strike a blow upon the sweetly tuned soul, music is the result; but from the ill-conditioned heart, the very finger of God Himself can bring forth nothing but harshness. The perfect heart—would one had it!—is like the perfect bell; there can come no stroke upon it, but the result is sweetness and music; while from the imperfect heart, every stroke brings forth discord.

There was One once in this world who, for us sinful men, came to show what a perfect heart could do. What blows were struck upon that heart! By nail and hammer—the thorny crown—the scourge, the wormwood, and the gall—the cross borne—his side pierced—what blows were

struck upon that heart! And what came of it? Music!—

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." "It is finished!" "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

Strike but a little blow upon fiery Peter!—oh! great heart it was, but not a perfect heart,—out leaps the sword of the impetuous man!

The one bell was cast in perfection, and gave music out at every touch; the other was a bell with a flaw in it, you know, and under a slight stroke it gave out fierceness and wrath.

Oh! far beyond all theological creeds Christ will ever stand, if but for that one illustration of a perfect heart, which is never smitten or stricken so as to produce discord, but ever gives out sweet music; for it is all musical in love to God and love to man. It is in perfect harmony itself, and defies all things to produce anything else out of it. For ever and for ever, the consummate beauty of the perfect heart of Jesus Christ will stand. Naught could tempt him, or make him harsh. He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. The prince of this world came to him, and "*found nothing in him.*"

Ponder upon these matters, and you will see

how the whole office of life ought to be, so to tune the nature of man that what used to tempt may have no power over him, except to produce sweetness; that where once there were weeds, fair roses may now bloom. Look at the lesson Nature teaches us in these things. On the field of battle, which has been trampled by armed hosts, led on by kings for their own base designs, what does Nature say? In a few short weeks the grass is green again. Nature is no echo, giving back blow for blow—she covers, with her lovely creeping plants, the very building that one man has raised and another ruined, and the bloody rain of the slaughter on the battle-field does but increase the glory of her next year's growth. A kiss for a blow. That is the true method of Christian cause and consequence.

Our fathers knew that the path of a true man is always through fire, and that within every man lay the possibilities of explosion. The gunpowder was there, only waiting for the spark. Therefore they used to damp their powder. They had many ways of doing it. Lenten fasting was one. The old ascetics shut themselves up, leaving the world and mortifying the body, and thereby rolled out many a barrel of gunpowder.

Learn to dampen your powder, and the sparks of evil that fly around you will be harmless. And, on the other hand, learn another lesson of cause and consequence.

The angels gave the Patriarch their blessing *because he entertained them.* Teach your children that even good angels cannot bless, unless you entertain them. Keep the powder that will answer to the spark of the fire of God ever bright and ready—so shall it leap up in answer to His Word.

As an Æolian harp, over which let the wind blow never so roughly, gives out only sweet music—so let your hearts and minds be attuned, that, let the storms of life blow ever so roughly, the sweet music of God may be the only result given forth by you.

Be not the stony rock, that gives back only the echo of the blow that is given to it; or, if you must be but a rock,—give forth, when stricken, the stream of living water. "Out of the fulness of the heart," remember, "the mouth speaketh."

CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE.

"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."—ECCLESIASTES viii. 11.

IF you compare this book of Ecclesiastes with that earlier book, the book of Job, you will see that Man's understanding of the ways of God was gradually becoming clearer. The very word "speedily" itself could hardly have been put into the book of Job, because Job looked for the connection between Evil and calamity, Good and prosperity, to be almost as rapid and certain as is the connection between the firing of a gun and its report.

But, by degrees, men found that there may be distances, and that as the flash may be seen long before the sound is heard, so a cause may have existed long before its consequence follows.

In this Book of the Preacher you find men striving after the solution of the great mystery.

"All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; as is the good, so is the sinner."

But while perplexed at the similarity of the fate of men, notwithstanding their diversity of conduct, the true Law of Life is beginning to be understood in it;—that Consequence is never really other than what the Cause must produce, but that between the execution and the sentence, between the sentence and the crime, there may have been long delay. For, as in a court of law we sentence a man weeks and even months before we execute him, so it is in life.

The characteristic folly of men is set forth by the writer of this Book, when he says that men are fools enough to think that because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore it is no matter how they live; as are the good, so are the evil—as are the evil, so are the good. Their philosophy of life is just this—to eat and drink, to love your wife, anoint your head, and make your life jolly; that is about the sum of the business. And so it is now with too many of us.

Now, whatsoever causes the sons of men to set their hearts upon evil, is a thing which must be examined, answered, and checked.

So, for a moment, let us look at our text.

"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

Of course that "speedily" is the first pure assumption, because nobody ever said that sentence would be executed speedily. The ways of God are slow, and take time to work out their completion. All the covenants of God, especially the Gospel of Christ, are a cry to Man to come and be guided constitutionally, not absolutely.

The very Lord's Prayer that you repeat so often, if men had sense enough to understand it, proclaims that the government of God is constitutional.

It begins with—

"Our Father, which art in heaven."

Until we feel God to be our Father, we are not to claim Him as our King. Until we feel Him as the Father, we cannot ask to be loyal to Him as a King.

Then we say—

"Hallowed be thy name."

Be Thou so holy that Thy kingdom may be lovely

to us. Be Thou so tender, that we can be truly loyal.

The very order of this prayer is the lifting up of man into greatness. Father! Holy Father! therefore King! Not King only in the sense of those who are bowed down to, as too strong to be resisted, —for God is King over us all in that sense. If there be no other kingship but that which rules over the beasts, then our worship is but a superstition and a baseness.

Listen to the sweet prayer: Father, Lover, let Thy kingdom come.

So man is lifted by degrees into true loyalty, the loyalty that is based upon reverence, and glorified by love.

It may, therefore, be a part of this constitutional government of God, that the sentence against an evil work shall be purposely delayed; that things may be so ordered that, although sentence is sure, there shall be a long time before its final execution. But even though the word "speedily" is an assumption, yet there is nothing from which a large wisdom needs to deliver a man more than from this delusion concerning the tarrying of time and space. Men forget that the beginning of a Consequence follows immediately after the beginning of a Cause.

Wise men think over these things. The dropping of water hollows the stone, not by one act of force, but by frequent falling. I suppose that no microscope of any possible power could show you any visible change in the stone after the first drop, nor, perhaps, after the second, nor even after the third. But, remember, there could have been no Thousandth if there had been no First. Now, that stone has to be hollowed, hollowed by that dropping; and it is hollowed by the first drop as much as by the thousandth.

So a vast number of other things are constantly happening around you, of which you do not see the effects at once. Day after day you look above you, but you see nothing; and yet, suspended in the air through which you look, are the coming rain and snow, held invisibly, until some sudden change in the temperature occurs, when all these things become seen.

Ignorant people (and people mostly are ignorant), if you point out to them that the atmosphere is full of rain, say, "Oh, I cannot see it." What has your seeing to do with it? One of the very first uses of education is to make a man see what a very little he can see; how small is his range of vision.

There are a vast number of "Invisibles" in

human life in regard to conduct; and men must bring themselves, if they are wise, to just the same conclusion about them,—that all Consequence is the result of Cause, and every Cause has a Consequence.

Take, for instance, the effects of drink. It is very clear to every one that the first glass began it. "Oh yes, but nobody could detect it," you say. Precisely. Yet the inevitable consequence was caused by that first glass; for if there had been no first, there could have been no second, and so on. The mischief begins with the first act. So of everything else from which man suffers. Consequence is never divorced from cause; the one may be within our vision, the other beyond it. There is never an instance where the thing that a man does, is not followed immediately by the beginning of the consequence. It may be invisible, but it is there. For you can have nothing without a beginning. There is no possibility of getting the Omega and omitting the Alpha in life; and though men oft strive to do it, they cannot.

Now, some little scientific study of this matter will be useful. A man comes to you with an "exception" (charming people, these exceptional people!). Perhaps your medical man has told you that wine

is mischievous to you, and that, if you drink it, you will suffer for it. Well, you like wine, and you don't want to give it up. You look out of the window, and by-and-by you see an "exception" coming, a jolly, white-headed old man, who, "to your knowledge, has gone to bed 'mellow' every night for the last thirty years, and he has never suffered any evil consequences,—therefore——" Ah! but it does not follow that the consequences would not happen to you, in your case. There are long-date bills, and short-date bills, and so it is in life. "Ah! but," you say, "you don't mean it did that hale man any harm?" Wait for his son, or his grandson, and you shall find that to them he has bequeathed the consequences of his folly, without bequeathing to them his enormous vitality. I have watched people who never leave their goods to their children, but leave them their evils. So it is in other things. And on this man, this "exception," though you shall write, "Sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily," yet it will be executed—on his child. And do you dare to say, "That is quite another matter"? Will you be a pitiful sneak, and because you can crawl to the grave without being whipped, let your child have to take the whipping for you?. Of all mean-

nesses, that is the most mean, that a man should be willing that his child should be scourged in his stead, and should make that a justification for his wrong-doing, and then call himself an "exception." When men rise into anything like the nobleness that is possible for them, the child will be looked upon as the book on whose pages their sins or virtues shall be written; and men shall learn to tremble far more at the consequences that may result to the child, than at any punishment that can come upon themselves.

Yet I see men every day befooled by this. They feel not the suffering, and therefore they are willing to let somebody else bear the burden; whereas it is the noble part of a man to bequeath nothing but good; or, if there be any penalties and punishments to be borne, to bear them himself in his own life.

Will you tell me that you see many getting through this life successfully, as you call it, without doing any good that you can see? What *scrubs* there are who "get on" in the world! Like the man of whom it was said, "His soul might be put into a nut-shell, and then it would creep out at the maggot-hole." These are the men who "do well" in life. Of course they do. If the sword is never

drawn, the scabbard never wears out. The way to "do well" (one of the ways) is to have no soul. For a soul brings with it costs and charges. It is a guest that requires much entertainment; and ofttimes, in entertaining the spirit, the body must go short. As, for a man to do honour to a guest who is greater than himself, he must deny himself, and the commons must be short for a week or two to come; so, ofttimes, the poor body, in finding entertainment for this sublime and heavenly guest the soul, must take it out in self-denial, hard study, premature weakness, and, perhaps, early death.

Sometimes people point to these selfish men of the world and say, "What have these suffered?" Ah! but what have they not lost? And of all things the most painful is for a man to have lost his soul without knowing that it is lost.

For, just as in the days of slavery, men pointed to the "happy slave," who seemed to enjoy his life in slavery, and yet in that very enjoyment, lay the bitter misery of it; the poor man had lost, and knew it not; he had lost his manhood, and knew not that it was lost,—so the most piteous sight of all is when a man has lost his soul, and knows not of that loss. "This night thy soul shall be required of thee;" but the man knew not what a

loss it would be. He suffered loss and knew not that it was a loss, and therein was the chief loss of all.

We have looked at the assumption that execution should be speedy. But there is also always a presumption in us, whether avowed or no, that we shall be the "exceptions," that we shall be the exceptional men. We think, if we do not say, "Here is a lottery; we know there will be a prize or two in it: somebody must win; why not we?" Somebody may drink much and be healthy; why not we? Why may not we drink, and not be detected?

Oh, man! who told you that you should be an exception? How dare you speculate upon it? Ah! we have all done it ourselves. Because we have done evil and nothing came of it, subtly and secretly there came to us the thought that we might be the "exception." It was given to us to play with fire for a short time and not be burnt, to break the divine law and not be convicted; so we thought that we should be of those who draw out of life these "prizes," and that we should escape the consequences of what we knew to be wrong.

Oh! ye speculators for the "exceptions"! It is not only that you calculate on the bill being long in

coming in, but do you not think to escape payment altogether? Be sensible. Do you think that if you go to an inn, and they seem to forget to bring in your bill,—do you think that they have really forgotten it? You enter the inn, and every attention is paid to you, and the "boots" looks reverently after you (that is, if you appear "respectable;" for he reverences a shilling man in preference to a sixpenny one). Do you think that with all this they will forget the bill? Oh no! By-and-by in it comes, and you look at it. Have they forgotten anything? No, it is all down; it has all been booked, booked, booked, daily. And in this strange Inn of life I have been a guest, and sometimes a hearty and happy one, ordering some of the fairest things that could be had. But do you think that, having seen all this world's fairness, having tasted of its sweets, having looked at its kings, and seen all its little toys,—do you think the bill is not being kept against me? It is! And when it comes in I shall find every item entered, and I shall find this,—the total will be much larger than will be pleasant.

Now we will look at it another way. For it is the duty of a white-headed man to warn you of these things. The fire will burn, and passion will

be strong, when the temptation comes. So we will take this matter another way.

All of you know what a dangerous thing Credit is. Some of you know what an admirable thing Credit is; admirable, because on it is built up a material commerce which would not be possible without it. Were it not for Credit, men's doings must be but small, their exchange of goods but trifling. Nevertheless, Credit is a fearful danger and trouble among small folks. To a great manufacturer, Credit has little risk or danger; it is to those who deal in small chandlery that it becomes dangerous —so dangerous, that men have wished to bring in an Act to make the recovery of sums under five pounds utterly impossible.

How constantly you and I buy things that we should not buy, if we had to pay for them at the time! How often a woman will run up a bill for things that she could do without, if she has not to pay for them at the time! How often we see men run up a "score" at the public-house, if they have not to pay for it at the time! How many times have you been into a shop and ordered things, and have not paid for them, nor asked yourselves whether you were willing, or even whether you were able to pay?

And then, when you had ordered the goods on "credit," and had eaten them, or worn them, how uncomfortable it was to pay for them! "Dear me," you said, "how these pestering bills do come in!" It amuses, while it saddens me, to hear people say so often, "How these bills come in!" Watch them the first thing in the morning. Ah! there the postman comes! And the letters are brought in, and the wife looks up eagerly (for there is nothing, perhaps, that women and children like better than to have a letter or two "by post"). But the father of the family takes up his letters wearily, and after he has opened them, exclaims, "There is nothing but these pestering bills!" Why, you have eaten the goods, and worn out the stuffs, haven't you? Ah! but there is the pang. To pay your money and take home the goods with you,—there is some satisfaction in that; but to have to go home with nothing but a receipt in your pocket, that is mortifying. To march down the street with the things you have paid for, that is good; but even a good man and an honest man cannot pretend to have the same pleasure in paying for anything after he has eaten it, that he has in paying for it when he is just going to eat it. This system of Credit becomes a pitfall and a

snare, in which men founder and are lost. If, when the pedlar came round to you or to me with his basketful of the things for which men sell their souls—ambition and wealth, gold and crowns, and diamonds, and all the vile things for which women pawn their souls and men sully their consciences and become rogues; if, as you and I weighed the gold, and looked at the fine flash of the diamond, and beheld the king's crown, and what they call "popularity" (the dirtiest of all crowns); if, while we stood by the side of that basket, the man had said to us, "You shall have them, but money down,"—what an awful thing that would seem! "No, no," we say; "Credit, credit, or we cannot have them."

Many a young man has stood beside that basket, and the pedlar has told him that he should become a "peer," or something of the sort; but if he had told him at the same time, how for that, honour's bloom must be given, its fine edges must be ground away until coarseness of conscience and contempt of principle are the result,—would he have taken the wares out of that basket? I think not. And, in that case, "ready-money" would have been his salvation.

And if the woman, who, for the pleasures of this

world, has looked over those velvets and gewgaws, and been tempted by them; if the poor Magdalen had been told that for that fragrant alabaster-box she must forfeit her modesty and womanly sweetness, and her soft voice be changed to the harsh tones of the harlot,—perhaps they would have put back those gaudy things into the basket, and the pedlar's wares had been pronounced "too dear."

And the rich man,—if it had been told him what sort of thing he should become, a miser, a waiter upon a money-bag, willing to sell the beauty of life in order to lay one more coin upon his store; if it had been told him that love would leave him, and friends depart, and people would look upon him as that most contemptible of all creatures, a mean-hearted rich man,—he, too, might have turned from the glittering basket, and have cried, "Too dear!"

And the man that has looked at the flask in the pedlar's basket, looked at the wine giving its colour aright in the cup, ruby red, and fascinating in its colour, looked and been tempted to drink it;—if the pedlar had only held up to him the drunkard's face, the dishonoured name, the broken home, the shattered life, the trembling hands, the nerveless step, and had said, "That is the price!"—ah!

perhaps the ruby wine had been put aside, and the man had said, "Too dear, too dear!"

And what other picture can we not draw? Take anything for which men sell their souls. Remember, you have all sold your souls to mean pedlars when you have given yourselves to any meanness whatever. For the life of the soul is this—to love life at its fairest and noblest; to prefer wisdom to wealth; to be Men in the sight of God, never mind what you are in the world's eyes. If this has to be sacrificed for anything the pedlar can offer you, then let him go! tell him you will not pay!

Now what do you do when he comes to you? He tells you, perhaps, that you shall have the things you want, and that payment can be deferred till by-and-by. What do you do?

Ah! I have watched people constantly, and I know how it is.

Here is some poor woman. The pedlar has gone to her door, and shown her the delightful things which women value so much, and beguiled her into purchasing them by saying, "You need not pay at once; you can pay by weekly instalments." And has not that been the way with you and me in life? We are tempted by the pedlar's wares, and

fooled by his words. "You need not pay now; a note of hand will do."

Every day I read advertisements of this kind. I look at them and smile, because one likes to see the traps set for fools; to see the bait prepared, and watch the cheese being toasted.

"Money lent to any amount; no difficulty, trouble, or exposure." "Goods supplied on credit; quarterly instalments taken." So you and I have applied.

Ah! if we had paid before we carried our goods away, I should have been a happier man, and you too!

So men take riches from the pedlar and lose their souls, and women take pleasure from the pedlar and lose their sweetness, and men take the cup and lose their health.

What, then, shall we do? Write against all these things—

"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

Because the consequences are not paid down as ready money, therefore men venture and risk and gamble away their lives, and think that perhaps the bill will be forgotten, and that it will

never come in. Well, I have known a case where a bill was never sent in, and when the man went to pay what he owed, the people were gone. But should I be wise to think that I shall be an exception? Tell me, if you had had to pay for all these things at the time, would you not have been better men, and happier men than you are now?

Now, young men, listen to me! The pedlar will come to you as he came to me, and he will show you his wares—and many of them are very lovely. For, remember, the pomps and vanities of this world are lovely, and that is the reason we have to forswear them—because they are lovely. It is amusing sometimes to hear people talk about "giving up" the pomps and vanities of this world; people who never had them, and who never knew anything of their loveliness. What did King Solomon say? "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup." It is then that we are to beware.

The pedlar will come to you with his basket and will spread before you all his wares, and he will tell you, "There is nothing to pay to-day, nothing to pay; you can run up a score; we give you credit;" and you will add, "And perhaps they will forget the bill." But beware! You won't see the

first payment, perhaps, but it is made! No man ever did wrong yet without suffering loss; and as a man gets nobler and nobler, not to have what is noble becomes to him the greatest loss of all. That were a weak child who, because it could do wrong without your knowing it, would therefore do it. The noble child thinks more of the tear that runs down your cheek than of the stroke upon his own back. That he looks upon with scorn. He cares little for physical pain, for that can be conquered; but by the sensitive child the losing of favour is counted a greater loss than the losing of ease. The child who thinks more of the stroke upon the back than of the broken heart of the mother, that child has lost much.

Suppose the penalty for a particular sin were to have your eyes put out. "Oh!" you say, "that would be terrible! What a shocking thing!" Yes; but suppose your eyes were allowed to remain in, and yet be of no good to you there. Suppose you had to walk through the world, and see not the glory thereof; to go through life, and see not its lustre; to read the word of God, and see not its glorious meaning; to watch the history of this world, and miss the footsteps of the Almighty through it; to have eyes, and yet to see no light beyond this

world, but to regard the world to come as a peradventure—would not that be still more terrible? And if lust and passion have dimmed your eyes, until at last they be so covered with films and cobwebs that, having eyes, you see not—oh! is that nothing?

In some bodily maladies there are times when the fine vision of the eye becomes dim; and when one looks up at the moon, the cobwebs born of earthly sin seem to extend even to the moon itself. So, across the clear face of the Almighty, the chills and doubts and darkness bred of evil are spread; and, instead of our beholding all light, all fatherly sweetness and pity, revengeful feelings are made to show themselves upon the face of God; until the religion of this and of all countries is a religion which makes out God to be tyrannical and vindictive, a hard, harsh bargainer, incapable of loving man until the sacrifice of the life of His Son had been poured out before Him.

Is it no punishment to have these films across the fine gold? these cobwebs covering the glass through which God is to be looked at?

Now, I warn you. There is the pedlar! There are the booths! You won't have to pay down just

yet; but there is a score kept, and if it is not brought in to be paid now, be sure there will be something taken out of your life that you might have had. I have sinned, and I have got off lightly. I have broken the law, and have suffered very little penalty, certainly. But how much stronger and nobler I might have been! How much larger and more passionate a lover of truth and righteousness, of purity and nobleness, of honour and justice, I might have been! What a man I might have been, if I had not gone amongst the fools, of whom the wise man said, "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, *therefore* their heart is fully set in them to do evil"!

Let not that be your "therefore."

"A DAUGHTER OF ABRAHAM."

"Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?"—LUKE xiii. 16.

WHY we have taken these words you will find before we have done. Whatever opinion they who are set in authority hold about those beneath them, those beneath them will justify. Whatsoever any children may be said to be by those in authority over them, that, and no other, will those children become. If in a house you treat those about you as banded knaves, the chances are that they will justify your opinion; for, being pre-judged, they know they have no chance of changing that judgment, and though not always will a man's tongue say it, yet often will his heart feel it. If you make up your mind that a man is a fool, your opinion being a prejudice, and therefore not to be shaken, that man, in his dealings with you, will probably

act as a fool. For the misery of a prejudice is, that not being founded on facts, and not being dependent upon facts for its continuance, facts cannot shake it.

Hence, you must have noticed in your study of the world's history, that man rises or falls according to the belief that has been held about him. When men have called the poor of the world the swinish multitude, the multitude has been swinish. And this is the perpetual result of foregone belief. The theory will become a fact; the poor despised will become the poor despicable. On what you think even of your dogs depends greatly what they will do. Hold men to be base and they will continue in their baseness. Those of you who know history,—who have watched the doings of the peoples of the world, or even those of you who have not read history, but who merely study the doings of your neighbour's house (a very pleasant practice), will alike have verified this.

And here the theory of Christianity touching our human nature becomes vindicated, and shines forth in all its wondrous love, in all its supreme wisdom, in all its natural practicability. Christ always treated human nature according to its fact; and Christianity is, of all religions, a religion of down-

right fact and reality. It comes to you and says, you have gone astray, and calls upon you to return; it tells you that you are broken, ragged, and torn, and calls to you to amend yourself. It flatters no one with false praise, but denies no theory of possible perfection. It owns the ugliness of life, and acknowledges its beauties. It neither calls man an angel needing no remedy, nor a devil incapable of any. It is a noble religion, neither flattering man's fairness, nor glossing over his foulness; neither inflating him with vanity, nor weighing him down with despair; neither going into false ecstasies about his angelic nature, nor condemning him as irredeemable. It brings man, high and low, into one common condemnation with God; and, holding up the Son, invites them to His grace. It draws out of man's degradation an added glory; for in the heavenly land there is more joy over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine that need no repentance.

When I have heard sweet preachers who have told me, that if I only knew it, there were my wings for me to fly, and that if it had not been for an overwhelming modesty, there was saintship to be gained, I have been in a difficulty as to whether I should answer with a smile of contempt,

the crow of scornful laughter, or a burst of such downright indignation as was merited by their folly. Rather than acknowledge the beauty of man as I know him, rather than tell him that he is beautiful, I would join with the satirist who called him a forked radish with a curiously carved head. I would tell him, "You are not beautiful, you are full of sores and ugliness. You have gone astray. You are a poor, mean, miserable sinner. You have gone astray, and have eaten filth from the swine-trough. You are ugly and ungracious. There are few things lovely about you; and you are puffed up with a foolish pride and vanity." But the glory of the Christian religion is, that taking man in this forlorn condition, it brings out of all his raggedness and wretchedness the hidden beauty, reveals the eternal possibilities of the soul, and calls upon man to behold in Christ the signs of that divinity of manhood to which he himself may reach. It is a great, manly religion. It has no flatteries and no euphuisms. It speaks plain truth about the actual, and leads to the glory of the possible; teaching the thing that is, in order that we may the better work and wait for the thing that shall be. It is full of glorious passion, and is lighted with flashes of sweetest poetry. The curse of some of

the great poets has been, that they have spoken of the wrong so sweetly, that it has seemed better than the right: sin has been so gloriously attired, that it has seemed fair and lovely. And, on the other hand, many a saint whose passion was for virtue, and whose life was a crying after godliness, has clothed his holiness in so dirty a shirt of horse-hair as to make it foul to the sight of his fellows.

It was a great man who first dared to call wickedness "the bottomless pit." The image is great and true, for there is no limit to the possible depth of human iniquity. The human soul is so largely, so strangely, so wonderfully fashioned, that it may sink to infinite depravity or rise to infinite purity.

The religion of Christ recognizes all the possibilities of the soul, and hence, being honest to man's meannesses, and firm in its insistance on his possible greatness, it makes an appeal such as no other religion can make—to all men. Be they as mean as they may be, as low as they may be, as foul as they may be, it opens to them the unspeakable possibilities of eternity. It takes the beggar Lazarus from the gates of Dives, and gives him God for a father, and Abraham's bosom for to lie in. It says to the meanest wretch on the face of

the earth, "You are God's child, and joint-heir with Christ." It takes the saddest and the vilest, and proclaims, "This man shall know the eternal peace." In this lies the wondrous beauty of the Christian's faith, that it discourses so sadly of the mean littleness of man's doings, and sings so sweetly of the divine greatness of his hopes; it gives so fair a picture of the house from which he came, and from whose glories he has in blindness and in folly wandered so far away; it tells of the rapture with which his return will be received; and so recognizes his despair and his hope, his sorrow and his joy, his meanness and his greatness.

There is a rough honesty about some of us which makes us laugh when people flatter us, which prevents us from accepting undeserved praise as true.

Now, Christianity flatters no man. It tells man the truth about himself in straightforward, downright phrase,—tells him how utterly he has failed, and how low he has fallen. Then it comes and teaches him that far beyond the clouds of time and the cares of life, lies a land of peace and beauty, for which he, tired with war and sick of sorrow, is destined.

Thus it was by this honest admission of things as they are, and this glorious setting forth of things as they should be, that Christ did his work in the world.

It is only by honesty that any work can be performed. But the world is full of dishonesty, by which no work can be done.

Look at the disposition to flatter one class or the other at one time or another! You may hear any day people proclaiming the sublime doctrine of equality to a set of dirty, greasy ragamuffins, and telling them that it is one of the great ends of politics to lift them to a level of influence with the wealthy and the wise, because somebody has said, in about as ridiculous a phrase as ever was written, "All men are born equal." Is there any truth in turning round to the ragged mob and gratifying them by telling them how virtue long since forsook kings' palaces and took up an abode with the dirty and the ignorant? It makes one angry to hear such melancholy, lying cant; and sad to find fools wide-mouthed enough to take it in. Next to having the reality, I suppose, comes the pleasure of being told you have it. There must be some sort of delight in being gulled into believing in one's virtue and beauty and loveliness. But this vile

flattery of a class for party purposes is hateful. If an ordinary working-man should come to me and expect me to belaud him, the chances are that he would find himself mistaken. Shall I praise you for your wisdom, your cleanliness, your generosity, when you feel yourself—or ought, at least, to feel yourself—a mean, dirty, selfish rascal? Shall I, knowing that you starve your children and spend half your earnings in beer, talk about the ability of the working classes to deny themselves, and let you take the praise as if it belonged to you? It is shameful that men should be found to preach this rubbish; that men, for self-interest's sake, should praise selfishness for generosity, ignorance for wisdom, and vice for virtue.

It is the prerogative of the true man always to be with the multitude and not with the few, but it is never his business to flatter the multitude.

He goes into the byways because he finds there misery which he may remove, sickness which he may heal, foulness which he may cleanse. To have to go into those foul byways to preach anything but salvation were perhaps hard for him; but into the sad places he takes the glorious news of salvation and regeneration, and takes it gladly. Christianity to the dwellers in these places is one

continual exhortation. All its cry is, "Retrace your steps—come home to the glory and sweetness you have lost—return to the love whence you are exiled." Every one of its cries is a reproach and an invitation. It reproaches that it may show the need of grace, and then offers the grace freely. It strips men of pride that it may clothe them with the true garment of holiness. It tells them God loves them, not because they are loveable, but because they may become so; and that He is gracious, not because they are charming, but because they ought to be and may be so. Flattery is altogether a mistake, both for the flattered and the flatterer; and he who lets himself down to say pleasant things to those whom in his heart he despises, will take it out in bitter hatred when they are out of sight. The true man will stoop to no false praise, recognizing what man might be and what he should be too well; scorning to flatter, going among the people who are mean and miserable, and disguising no whit his opinion of their meanness and their misery, but rather displaying it to their dimmed eyes that they may the sooner come out from it.

Unless Christianity brought one to this, it would be a creed such as no honest man could hold. Its

office is to lift man from his baseness and repulsion; and unless he can be made to see that he is base and repulsive, he will continue so.

Have you felt no difficulty in mixing with some people? There are people who cannot look without being unlovely, and cannot speak without growing actually hateful. They radiate disgust; they carry about with them an atmosphere which afflicts the sensitive like the air of a miasma. Why not say so? Of all cants, that philanthropic cant which calls upon one to love what is unloveable, and laud the abominable, is the most disgusting. To be called upon to say you love every man as he stands, be he never so vile; to be asked to acknowledge beauty in the inhuman ugliness of every scoundrel you meet, is sickening; and to comply with this foolish cant is but to add one more liar to the long list of canting hypocrites with which this world is afflicted. In proportion as a man grows wise, he hates, with an increasing hatred, this foolish creed. As if one of these philanthropical people should carry us into the back lanes of a great city, amid filth and squalor unspeakable, and expect us to praise the sweetness of its air and the beauty of its scenery. Were it not more wholesome for the man himself, to tell him, "I see

no beauty in that; I see nothing there but ugliness. If I had some holy gift, some heavenly secret which, while owning to the hateful and the hideous, would transform them into lovely and beautiful, the matter would be different, but I have no such power." If the physician refuses to see the disease, you may give up the patient.

Do not think that I am defending that which I count one of the most abominable things in life—false fastidiousness: the fastidiousness that dreads the contact with dirt, for fear of personal defilement. Nay; for some of the whitest hands I have known have done the foulest work for the degraded sick; and stands He not out for ever the purest soul and the noblest, who stooped the lowest!

But, though you stoop to raise the low—can this prevent your hatred of mean things? All the prophets who have ever lived might have cried themselves into hoarseness before they could have made us love some people.

Then there is other talk about the love a man owes to his relations! "You *must* love that man or that woman." Why? "Because they are your relations." Because she is my aunt, must I love a woman, who, if she were any one else's

relation and not mine, would incur my righteous hatred and contempt? I fail to see it. She is morally ugly, and I should therefore dislike her; but, then, she is my aunt, and therefore I should love her! The fact of her being my aunt can hold no sway over my affections. That cannot bring love. Love goeth not forth by commandment of lawgivers. It goes out where it finds the lovely—it is a law unto itself, and obeys its own sweet instincts only. Human love can never be coerced. I have tried that business; I have found it a failure, and I have given it up. There is no earthly power which, by issuing an order, can make you love the people who live in your street.

The Christian precept laid no order on man which would bear that construction. One of the ends of Christianity is to deepen and give force to all those faculties through which, at the sight of foulness, we feel repulsion.

Set me to look at a downright extraordinary creature, not merely plain but positively ugly—like the woman whom Christ healed, who had been plagued with a devil of infirmity eighteen years, and was now doubled up, hideous—and tell me whether if you look at that woman long enough

you will see her beauty. No! The more I look at her, the less I like her;—the longer I behold her, the faster I run away from her.

But I am called back to her by one little touch. Christ claims for her no beauty, invests her with no fancied fairness.

"She, too, is a daughter of Abraham."

This is all. But this was enough; for Christ knew that by this appeal he lifted the poor, stricken, bowed creature of infirmity, and gave her a place with the rest of Abraham's children. He called upon the patriotism of the Jews—and they had a patriotism, though but a narrow one. "This woman," who "is a daughter of Abraham;"—the words gave her a proud pedigree, and set her upon an equality with the proudest. For the Jew prided himself upon his descent, and recognized the nobility of the pedigree everywhere. Even in the case of this poor woman, they can bring no answer when they are told that she, too, is a daughter of Abraham, and of almost royal lineage. By this one glory her deformity vanishes, as when in the miserable lanes of great cities the moon shines down, and straightway they grow lovely.

Now I do not say that the daughtership of Abraham was the highest of earthly prerogatives,

but it was sufficient for the Jews. There was a great knavish hypocrite at the head of the Synagogue, as often happens—a man who was very willing to abide by the letter of the law, neglecting its spirit and knowing nothing of it: very willing that the woman should be kept crooked, and that such as were straight should be allowed to keep straight, but above all careful that the letter of the law should be preserved—one who would be sure to keep out of the way of a beggar lest he should be asked to relieve him. To him Christ turns and says, "Is she not also a daughter of Abraham?" The question was equal to the time, and put an end to the cavilling of the Jews at once.

This is the secret.

The only way to conquer natural disgust at ugliness and sickness and disease, is to set these unsightly objects in the light of Divine Love. "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren."

Bring these poor degraded wretches, and ask us to love them individually, and we fail to do it. To lift them out of the misery in which they rest, and to make them loveable, you must set them in the light of the great Fatherhood of God and His passionate love of humanity.

How easy it is to do gracious things for some people, who are in themselves so gracious and so noble that we might say of them, as John the Baptist said of Christ, that we are not worthy to loose the latchets of their shoes. There are feet which make gracious the ground whereon they tread; there are souls so sweet that they win love from all men. But the iron hand of compulsion can drive no one to love. There are men in this world so loveable and so noble, that one would rather have the dust of their feet than wealth at the hands of others. Where love does come, all things are glorified in the light of its great and deep emotion. Man cannot admire that which is not admirable; he cannot force himself into love of the unlovely. Unless such love comes as will hide all these things, they are and must be disgusting.

A man goes into a sick-room, and there poor humanity is at its worst; there you may find the bottom of all man's meanness, his cowardice, his want, and his weakness; there you may see nature in decay, as ugly as the working of a continual want and weakness can make it. But as you cross the threshold of the sick-room, the great need of the patient is more than all; and if you come as the angel of healing, as the angel of true service,

the heart is too full and the hand too busy for you to stop to look either for beauty or for ugliness, and that love which prompts to the duty makes labour light. The poor sick person is not less tiresome, or less offensive, or less tedious, but the feeling which prompted disgust has gone. When men declared the possibility of walking on hot iron if the heart were pure and the conscience unstained, they did but figure the great power of Innocence. Una with her lion is but weak, but Una in her innocence is strong. And that which Innocence is thus so truly fabled to do, Divine Love surely does, overleaping difficulty and overcoming disgust.

Christianity does not ask us to believe that ugly things are lovely; but, filling man with true love and holy enthusiasm, makes him able to endure the sight of foulness and meanness, that he may cleanse and raise the foul and mean.

Men of the medical profession are good to watch. One feels inclined to pity the man who spends his time among the halt and maimed and sick; who sees humanity continually in its most repugnant aspect. Fancy a surgeon having the entrails of a man whose body has been exhumed sent to him. He has to examine them, say, for

traces of arsenic. One sight would make you shudder; he has to examine them slowly and carefully. And your pity is wasted, for he rather enjoys the business. I have seen one of these people getting ready for work. If it had been a preparation for a pleasure party he could not have gone about it with more zeal. For he sees what the layman cannot see; his love for science does away with his natural disgust, and his occupation becomes a charm, a joy, and a delight. The physician's whole life is a continual going about among meanness and wretchedness, and through all, his love for science and his desire for knowledge bear him up.

And should love of the dear God be a less strong motive than the wish for knowledge? Sweet is the love of man for man—like to the love of God for man. And man, walking amid meanness, may himself be noble; and walking among foulness, may himself be clean, and rebuke uncleanness, becoming a force of love by unshrinking kindness.

Thus "one touch of nature makes the whole world kin." Is not this poor woman a daughter of Abraham? Is not this poor degraded wretch a brother? I remember that before England got rid of her great disgrace of slavery, the abolition

people used to distribute handbills, headed with a picture of a chained negro; the poor thick-lipped black asking, "Am I not a man and a brother?" We all acknowledged the claim. But if he had said, "Am I not a beauty?" I should have answered, "No, my brother; you are certainly not a beauty. I decline to admire you." Should he reply, "This is all a matter of taste," I should answer in turn, "I don't believe a word of it. To my eyes you are very particularly ugly." But when he kneels there before me, and lifts up his poor chained wrists, and puts up that plea for his own humanity—"Am I not a man and a brother?" then, poor, scourged, broken, jaded as he is, I own him. He has a spark of true manhood in him, and shall be scourged, reviled, and sold in bondage no longer.

Thus the scheme of the Christian religion completes itself. It has the manliest scorn for meanness, and the manliest pity for weakness. Tenderly as a father will take up a child at sundown after a long day's journey, because the little feet are so weary, will God deal with the weak and the lowly. Our God is a good God, for His Son died for sinful man.

But the tenderness of God is no maudlin

sentimentality, and one of the greatnesses of that divine love whose peculiarities I am never tired of trying to understand, is that it dares to blame, and that it can be angry and scornful righteously. But it is greatest in that it loves the unlovely and forsakes us not, even at our foulest and worst. Human love is sweet, but it loves only the lovely because of its loveliness. The love of God abides with us who are not lovely, but mean and poor and wretched. We must learn, in our scorn of meanness and vileness in men, never to forget the divine pedigree of the men themselves. We claim no wings to fly with, we ask to be glorified with no saintship, we know that we have no right to forget the actual vice in our dreams of the possible virtue, but we claim for all, the sonship of God. The daughtership of Abraham has come to be of little account; that old Jewish time has gone with all its narrow sectarianism, and the whole world is open to the great communion. Goethe, you know, used to say he recognized a brother in the bush, in the flower, in the cloud, and loved him; whereby he figured a deep sympathy with all created things, and a seeing of all things in the light of God's love.

Thus I have learned to know that Christianity is

an honest religion, and the wisest, as it is the manliest. It is as brave and straightforward as a man need wish his faith to be, and as gentle and as tender as a mother. It is great at once in its beauty and its truth, and the secret of it all is Love.

JOB'S COMFORTERS.

"For they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him."—JOB ii. 11.

WHEN you talk of a man who wants to comfort you, but who tries the wrong means, you call him a "Job's comforter." Now, what was the matter with Job's friends? Can you tell me? They seem to have forgotten none of the little minutenesses of friendship.

Listen carefully to what they did—

"Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him. And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great."

Now, what was the matter with these three men?

They met together and made an appointment, and kept it; and when they saw their friend's grief, they wept; they "lifted up their voice" to weep; and then these matchless comforters sat down with him seven days and seven nights, speechless. They never spoke one word to him. And why? Because "they saw that his grief was very great."

They who discuss lofty matters often stumble upon the ground on which they walk, and he who goes star-gazing must expect to fall. They who talk much, must talk nonsense—it is the inevitable condition of human things; and whenever you get into any very lofty discussions, you will be sure to say many foolish things. But it is like a roll of thunder to hear this man curse the unlucky day of the calendar on which he was born. This man patient? Yes. But touch the volcano within him, and how he does storm and fume! He was patient in that he had to bear a great deal. Your medical man would call you a "patient," and very patient you have to be sometimes. But in the sense of bearing his sufferings calmly—patient? not he! As soon as he got a little better he raged and stormed.

And as to his meekness—he challenged God to discussion and dispute. "Why dost Thou lay Thy

hand upon me?" Is there anything more awful and more glorious? Instead of whimpering, his curses take heaven by storm! He has a discussion with the Almighty, and he is quite right. And then, when that great storm has done its worst, how lovely it is to hear the distantness of the thunder and the soft sweet rain of peace, and then to see the renewal of verdure after the rain.

Job does not deserve half the reputation that people have given him; and his friends—none of it. Those men have been held up to eternal ridicule as "Job's comforters" unto all the world; but they have given us an insight into the way to comfort those that are suffering. There is nothing more lovely or more difficult than to be a comforter. It is done best by the tender-hearted and the strong. These men were admirable comforters. Could friendship do a better thing than they did? They called upon one another and said—"Have you heard that our poor friend Job is in trouble?" And then they made an appointment to go to him and mourn with him and comfort him. A man that has not infinite cheerfulness in him is not able to pity or comfort.

"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

A weeping eye ofttimes desires another, and they who would pour out the oil of joy should be able to indulge in sadness. When the soul is very sad, silence is very good. I have watched people sometimes go in to comfort a friend, and they doled out their texts like a bashful curate. But these men sat in silence with Job seven days and seven nights, weeping with him. What more could they have done? His soul was sick even to death, and they sat down and watched him in silence. If you would be a comforter to a man, if he is in great sorrow, you need not begin to talk much to him—the less the better.

And that habit of telling him to "cheer up" is childish and foolish. Could Job "cheer up" until he had got his curses out? until his soul had wrestled and been thrown, or won the blessing? Cheer up? Go to those three men—they went to mourn with him first, and they comforted afterwards. The chief thing in mourning with a friend is to know his sorrows, and to feel them; to let his sorrow be your sorrow, his tears, your tears. First mourning, then comforting.

And here, by-the-by, a passing word or two about what is to be done with regard to children on the subject of death; for children are very

curious, and they will ask questions. I have known some nurses tell children that their dead father is put into the "pit-hole." What infinite pitifulness to teach a loving child that its "father is in the pit-hole!" As soon as the child is old enough, teach him this; say to him, "God has given me a lease of this house of mine, threescore years and ten, and if I take good care of it, it may be lengthened to fourscore years. And then, my boy, when the lease is up, I shall go my way to God, and live in a new heavenly house." How easy it is to make a child understand heavenly things! Martin Luther sits down to write a letter to his little son, and he says,—"I was passing by a beautiful garden, and I looked through the gates and saw a number of children at play, and they were all so happy, and some were riding on beautiful little ponies. And I said to the Gate-keeper, 'What children are these?' And he said, 'Oh, these are the little children who loved their mother, and told the truth, and were kind to their brothers and sisters.' And I said; 'I have a little fellow at home, could he come into this garden?' And he said, 'Oh yes, he may come here if he is good.'"

And his child understood. Allegory is to chil-

dren a native passion. Imagination is the element in which their thoughts are born.

Now a child should be taught from the beginning, "God sent me into this world to stop so many years, and when my time is up I shall go away, and that is what is called Death. I shall leave my clothes behind me, and my body—for this body is only a collection of various matters belonging to trees and animals, put together with wonderful skill. It is a glorious thing, this human body, but only for a little time necessary and useful; when the time comes I shall leave all behind me and go to my proper place; and though I shall be out of your sight for a time, yet some day you will follow me." There is nothing repulsive or fearful to a child in this; and when he hears of any one dying, he will only say, "There is another man leaving his mortality behind him." And so the little child shall have peace.

And don't be so disgusted if your child wants to play on the day his father died. Why should he not? Oh! if God were not more good to children than we are, they would have a hard time of it. Would I were a child again! For the bright things of my life are not those that I have held the fastest in my memory; not the red-letter days, but

the dark days and the evil hours. These need no impressing; they are written in blood-red characters upon the heart, and they abide. Why should you be vexed that the child will play on the same day that your sister died? It is not time for the child to sit on the ground for seven days and seven nights. There is a time for every purpose under the sun. So these little children are quick to remember the dark days, and wise to remember the bright days of their life. In comforting grown-up people, you must allow for that amazing egotism of the heart which requires nature to wear a veil on the day their soul is mourning. But the laughter of a child in the house of mourning is like one of the gleams of sunshine that tells us that the clouds have not overspread the sky all over—that behind the clouds the sun still shines.

Now about that question of silence. The less you talk to any one, in the first few hours of sorrow and under the first pressure, the better.

What infinite pathos and touching beauty there is about the sympathy of a dog! He looks so much, and says so little; he puts his cool nose into the hand of his troubled master, and looks up into his face with those large, loving eyes of his! Surely the Holy Ghost shall come through him, and carry

comfort to the man's soul, because he sees that even this poor creature knows how to be silent and how to feel.

Be silent, all but a word or two. But if, when the first grief is over, you go to talk about a dead child, do it. Praise the child's beauty. Ask the mother to tell you all about it. And then listen patiently while she is describing the disease; and as she goes over every minute particular, you must bear it. You must hear the same tale over and over and over again; you must "sit on the ground seven days and seven nights." After the first silence is over there is nothing like praise of the dead. Talk to the mother about how sweet the child was, how fair his locks. Talk to a wife about her loved and lost, how fair his name, how noble and true he was. There is nothing like praise of the dead. Had I been in Ramah and heard that voice of weeping, I would have allowed for the time when Rachel could not be comforted "because they are not;" and then, when the time for comforting came, and I had been comforter, I would have talked to her about the little children that "are not," of the first word the little one spoke, of his many little playful, loving ways, and so, by degrees, through this sympathy and large praise—though perhaps a little ex-

travagant—the sting would be taken out of her sorrow, and the poison got out of the wound.

Talk about the lost ones, for the heart delights to go over what it has lost, and men get slightly proud of their losses.

> "'Tis better to have loved and lost,
> Than never to have loved at all."

Lost treasures give a sense of comfort ever to have possessed them. Said a man, "I have forgotten more Latin than you ever knew." In order to lose a thing you must have had it. Said a man "I once had the very finest diamond ever known, and I have lost it." Yes, he has lost the diamond, but he has not lost the joy of it. To have had losses is a satisfaction. It is in human nature to magnify a loss by magnifying the thing lost.

Another thing. Never attempt to put back doubts with a text. Better go through with the discussion. Have it out. You and I, I trust, are delivered from a base fear of God. God is my Father, and I am His rebellious child—but I am His. If I understand not the ways of God, I tell Him so. I need more light. It is time for talk, after seven days' silence. Better have it out. So, when they say, "I cannot see why children should

die; I cannot see why their young life should be wasted," don't say to them—

"Whom the gods love, die young."

It sounds very beautiful, but there is not much in it. "Whom the gods love?" What life is so little worth the having that it is a mercy to have it cut off in early youth? "Life has so many miseries, that it is better they should be spared them." Indeed? I don't think that. I admit the difficulty. If the mother turns infidel, and the father is rebellious for awhile, God will not be angry with them.

It is not every hour in a child's life that it can understand how to be obedient. There are hours in a child's life when he is incapable of understanding; when he seems to be possessed by a sort of evil spirit. So it is with us grown children of God.

Therefore, if you have much to do with people who are in sorrow, you will hear them cry out, "Why did the child die? Why this waste?" When the child, by infinite care and pains and patience, has been brought through so many years; when its genius is developed, and its beauty at its full; what sad heart will not cry out, "Lord, why this waste?" And waste, to you and me, it is.

Therefore, if they speak in this spirit,—stormfully,—be patient; let the thunder have its roll. If piteously,—well, at first get poetical; give them fancy first, and something deeper afterwards. "Children are such lovely flowers, and God wanted them for His garden. God created them, and wanted them in His city. Earth is not the soil in which such flowers should grow."

But, if the man or woman has got any power of thought, you may venture further, and preach that most beauteous and comforting doctrine of the Eternal Presence and Unbroken Law—"What had God to do with the death of your special child?" He neither wanted nor ordered it, nor steps out of the way to save it. All things move on in their sublime course, and there is one fate and one lot for all. No genius can save your child from disease. If it is a sickly child, nothing can save it. If it is out of gear, no holiness can save it. And, it is well. Rolls not the river of life because of that sublime law? All fountains of blessing are open conditionally, and these conditions can be known on application. These laws cannot be broken—no, not even for your darling—not for a single day.

In the first shower of grief, be patient and silent

—then comes speech and comfort. Let the poor rebel have his curses out, and encourage him to do it. Help the weeper to weep, and the curser to curse. Let him send out all the ire that is in him; then, the wound being clean, the preparation is made for anointment. For one great art in the healing of wounds, is to see that there is no dirt or dust in them; the skilled physician must have cleanliness. It is one of the most necessary operations before comfort can be administered.

First show your ability and willingness to mourn with him. Then sweet silence until the mourner wants words. Then tender, patient listening to his curses. And then, if able, a quiet talk about holy living.

Activity is the best balm of all. Up again, and to work; for God hath put sweetest balm there, and often it is only when a man is at his work that he can find comfort. And for the mother—it is lurking in her household duties and petty daily cares. Comfort is like gold; it seldom comes to the surface, but has to be mined for and worked for.

There is nothing worse for the soul that is in trouble, than to sit down idly. Let him arise like David and wash his face, and go about his busi-

ness. Whilst a man is at work, the sorrows of his soul seem wonderfully to cease. Never encourage people to sit in sadness. As soon as possible after there has been a death in the house, let them get to work again, for in work God hath hidden greatest blessings.

Then, it is strange that people generally put out of sight all memorials of the dead. I don't think that is wise. All external things may be put away, perhaps; but anything characteristic, anything that came out of the heart, or that was made by the little fingers—keep them to comfort you in future days. The spirit of the dead shall be in them; they are for you, left behind, the new dwelling-place of the dead; and forth from these sad things there comes such sweet remembrance, that in after days you shall find them to be the best stoppers of tears, and the sweetest balm to the heart. I love not that putting everything that belonged to the dead out of sight. If I were to tell all I have seen, what pictures I might draw of the comfort to be got from these relics of the dead! I always admire those women who showed the garments that Dorcas had made; and I have no doubt that her friends were comforted by the sight of them. Many a woman has turned over

the little shoes and the little garments of the dead, and found them comforting, and put them back with a kiss, and laid them up again with another leaf of her heart around them. So, when she goes to her hidden worship, she finds them, strangely enough, to be to her the very oil of joy.

Talk of the dead. Most people don't do it—I wish I thought it was always from true depth of feeling. It used to be the custom at a feast to put chairs for the dead, that they might be filled with the spirits of those that were gone to rest. It is good to talk of those that are gone. This is the "communion of saints." They who believe and hope in God, do well to talk of the dead.

I have known people write elegies on their friends. But don't send a card, except to a lover; for when these things get commonplace and stale, the joy is gone out of them. They lose their comforting power, and cease to be true memorials.

There should be no nonsense talked about death not being an evil to those who are left behind. An evil it is. To sit, as I must sit, in my lone room, and think of the long years of loneliness in future stretched out before me; to strain my eyes into the dark past, and think of the loved ones that are gone;—it is a sorrow, and it was intended to be a

sorrow, but yet there is a comfort and a balm to be found.

And be sure you never talk to a mother about "loving the creature too much." I have read a treatise for bereaved mothers, upon "The undue love of the creature." Because, dear heart, she poured out all the wealth of her love upon her child—because she knew more of the blueness of heaven out of its little eyes than from any star-gazing whatever—because she brake the alabaster box, and poured all its precious contents upon her child—"God was jealous, and killed the child, in order to bring her back to Him"! Because, for a minute or two, she cannot see the stars of God—because her "idol," as they call it, is taken from her—"God is angry"!

There are gods, and gods—but no such God as that for me! Shall God punish the poor woman because she could not rise at once above the earth? Never! The child went, but not because the mother did love it too much. Do you suppose God wants you always to be thinking of Him? Is He never to be out of your thoughts when you are occupied with what He Himself has given you to do?

Take the Lord's own example of a Christian

Life—a little child. See how simply and naturally children are occupied with the present. I have learned to love the forgetfulness of children, and to bless God that with young people "out of sight" is often "out of mind."

When sorrow and loss are upon you, and your house is darkened with grief, shall I go to the door and say to the children who are playing in the sun, "Come in; you will find it shady in here"? No no; let the little ones alone.

Neither is God angry with us when we are taken up with the loved ones He hath given us to tend.

Therefore we will dispense with all that clerical nonsense. Put all that aside.

The more thoroughly human you are, the more thoroughly hearty will be your sympathy and your silence; and, when the time for comforting comes, the more you will praise the dead; for I rest upon that as the balm that shall carry more comfort than aught else. And lastly, when the time is ripe, there comes sunshine after the storm, and the clear shining after rain—discussion upon the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Let there be an honest admission, that after all that can be said about it, there is still a terrible darkness over the world to come. God sends a

cloud through which we can see but dimly. Admit it. Nevertheless, preach the doctrine of the Resurrection and the Life Eternal. Then say over the sweet words of the Master—

"I am the resurrection and the life;"

and, that said, let Him who is the Comforter, even the Holy Ghost, do all the rest.

Having mourned with poor Job, said your say to him, and purged his wounds, then, led on in bright vision, no more words of yours are necessary, but the words of the mighty Master Himself shall sink quietly into his heart, and "the peace of God that passeth all understanding" shall be given unto him.

SIX FRAGMENTS OF EARLY SERMONS.

I.

BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE.

"And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building."—1 KINGS vi. 7.

THE words I have read, as you are all aware, describe the building of that wondrous temple which it was permitted to Solomon to raise. We are going now to regard them—fearless of the charge of mysticism which may be brought against us—in a symbolical, and not in the historical sense.

A few words first, in explanation of the leading fact. Solomon, in his desire to hallow and keep holy the temple, adopted the plan of having the materials prepared at a distance.

On Mount Lebanon the trees were felled, and the timbers squared; there only, the stones were made ready, and there only, the axe and hammer rang, in order that the glorious temple might rise to heaven in Jerusalem, calm and unsullied, no noise profaning its quietness, no dust of preparation staining its purity. Utterly indifferent, as I said before, to the charge of finding more in the narrative than the writer meant (which, if correct, would only prove that he was a conduit for the Holy Spirit to flow in without his knowing it), we are going to inquire what moral and spiritual fact this history covers; in other words, whether God has not, like Solomon, a Mount Lebanon of labour, and a Holy Temple of repose.

Take first this daily miracle, the life of the body. Look at the fair skin, so quiet and impassive, and think, with the help of what little science you may possess, what a Mount Lebanon of labour it encloses. Look at the human frame from without, and it is a Solomon's temple; watch the growth of a child—it resembles that of his glorious building. But lift once the veil of the skin, and pierce underneath. No machinery the world can offer is so complicated, no process so intricate, no chemistry so active. Verily the sound of axe and hammer is

heard there; but lower the veil once more, and it is Solomon's temple again.

This lifting of the veil is, to any great extent, impossible; for God has made life resemble the Sphinx, who, when her riddle was guessed, destroyed herself. You may watch for the mystery of vitality long and eagerly, but you watch in vain. Follow it with the dissecting knife, and pursue it with the scalpel; it revenges itself by making your very pursuit ruin you. God, in the human body, as in nature, has a Mount Lebanon workshop, into which no human foot is permitted to enter. The building of the temple, rising in solemn silence to heaven, we are invited to watch; but that distant Lebanon, whereunto his trusty workmen are daily and nightly drafted, we may not see. In solemn secrecy all goes on there, unknown and unmarked, save by the workmen themselves.

Need I explain why God invites us not to His Lebanon? Too many of you are men to whom the mysteries of the workshop are familiar, for such an explanation to be generally needed. You know how few of the visitors whom the passing days bring to your doors are ever permitted to penetrate beyond the show-room. Why is this? Because the workshop would be simply a confusion and be-

wilderment to them; because, as their own expressive phrase has it, they would be "lost in it." But are you, the initiated workman, mystified? Not for a moment. Were I to visit your manufactory to-morrow, you could tell me the meaning of everything that went on; through the noise of the machinery, the dust of many feet, and the hum of many voices, you would contrive to explain and illustrate all. What you, then, in your corner of God's vineyard, are prepared to do for me to-morrow, suffer me to do for you, in mine, to-night.

God hides His Lebanon from us for the same reason that the sanctity of the workshop is maintained by the master—because prying curiosity is fatal to labour; because the essential condition of well-directed industry is that nothing come in the way between the workman and his work.

But God has another temple to build up, besides that of nature and the human body—

"The house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Earth is the Mount Lebanon to which Heaven shall furnish the Jerusalem. Time is the workshop of Eternity.

Until we can in some measure understand this, neither life nor death will ever appear in their true

characters. Men continually quarrel with this world for being what God designed it to be—a workshop, a timber-yard, a stone-quarry, a forge. When you go to a manufactory, you go prepared for noise and heat; you arm yourself to bear fatigue, and you seek to deaden the sensitiveness of your auditory nerves. Noise and dust you know to be inseparable from such places, and you make your arrangements accordingly for meeting them there. And shall I enter the solemn workshop of Life, and marvel that it is no summer arbour of delight, no shady bower of rest? Shall I complain that its dust turns me sick, and beg that its hammers would cease ringing, to rest my poor aching head? Verily no. The living stones of human hearts must be squared at any cost: the axe of affliction must fall, and the hammer of chastening ring, whether I am able to endure their piercing tones or not. The temple must be set up in Jerusalem, and, in order to it, here on Lebanon must be heard the groans of repentance, the wailings of bereavement, ay, and even the piercing death-cry itself.

Solomon's temple was built at the cost of sighs and groans and tears. Many a strong back was bowed in agony, and many a stalwart frame laid

low, ere the glorious stones were fitly squared. And can we wonder if the spiritual Lebanon have its woes and its wailings; if tasks at times seem too stupendous, and difficulties too great? Friend, whosoever thou art, who complainest that this world is too hard for us, that our sufferings are too many, our trials too severe,—come with me into the enclosure where some mighty edifice is rising, and see at what cost of suffering and of life it is carried on. Show me how men raise a house without noise, or build a vessel without labour; show me the stones that are to be had ready squared, the wood, proof against warping, ready seasoned; then build them up without stroke of axe or hammer, or any "tool of iron." Find me anywhere a Jerusalem temple without an answering Mount Lebanon, and then I will show you how God could have spared suffering and struggle out of this world; how He, too, could have found stones ready squared, and wood ready seasoned; how He might have made life a show-room, instead of a workshop.

But now not a grain of dust, not an engine-clang can be spared, for all prophesy of the glorious building they go to form. As you judge of the magnitude of an unfinished building by the scale

of the preparations, as your eye glances over heaps of stones, and rests upon piles of wood; so, standing here upon the top of this solemn Lebanon of the Lord, I gaze upon the love and affection, the self-denial and endurance, the weary night-watchings, and the days of sadness, until my imagination builds them up, and before me rises, in vision blessed, that "house not made with hands," of which the Lord God in His mercy grant that each of us may be a living stone!

II.

RENEWAL OF THE INNER LIFE.

"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."—2 CORINTHIANS iv. 16.

THERE are two causes for losing the beliefs of our fathers. One is a loss of inner life, causing the belief to fail inwardly; the other is an increase of life and growth, so that it falls from us outwardly. It would be well if each of us examined ourselves to see which of these two is our own case. Have you lost faith in the doctrine of the Atonement? Is it because you have lost sight of the great distance between God and yourselves? or have you learned the sweet lesson of God's forgiveness which preceded your repentance?

There is a waste in our inner life, just as there is in our bodily life. Waste and supply are the

necessary conditions of life. There is something of sadness in hearing a man say, "Ah! I am not the man I was." As age comes on he feels he cannot do so much. This must be the case with all of us; and well is it with those who can bear it gracefully. But how sad a thing it is when a man says, "I am not the man I used to be," meaning his inner man; implying that he is now fearful where he used to be of good courage; that he has lost hope, faith, and power of endurance.

There is a curious subject for thought, for those of you who wisely take time for meditation, in the increase of knowledge of chemistry and physiology. In one of the Poultry Shows a few years ago, a stripe of colour was noticed in the feathers of a bird, and the judges said, "This should not be so;" this year we find it altered.

So, in the bringing up of children, we are learning to supply particular wants, by the choice of diet; one kind of food is good for growth of bones, another for growth of muscle, another for keeping up the animal heat, and so on.

Just as these wants of the body can be supplied, so the waste of the inner life can be repaired. I would have you ask yourselves earnestly, what means do you each adopt, to supply this waste?

How shall a man's enthusiasm be kept up? It is difficult to do it, and yet it may be done.

Again, we lose our charity. Now, if we know ourselves thoroughly, our own weaknesses, follies, and shortcomings—perhaps, too, in those points where they are just least suspected by others—it shakes our faith in others. The more we know of men and women, the more we lose our charity, our faith and patience, unless we take care to get these graces of the soul renewed within ourselves. The only way in these cases is to consider the long-suffering of the Lord, and how He has borne with us these many years; then shall we be able to be more patient with others.

Good books are a chief means of renewing the inner life. He who will shut himself up for a little while alone, and read one of David's Psalms quietly to himself, shall find a great increase of the inner life. Meditation on the works of God is another means; the services of the church, its public prayer and praise. There are those who say they can do very well without them. Then they must be very differently constituted from George Herbert, who says—

> "Sundays the pillars are,
> On which heaven's palace archèd lies."

But do not mistake me. It is well to come here

and learn that others have the same wants, the same wearinesses, the same hopes, and the same joys as yourselves. But for those of you who are parents, church is not the place for the whole day. You are busy at work for the needs of the body and this life all the week; devote yourselves part at least of the Sunday to the children at home.

Read to them the lives of holy men and martyrs, —teach them how even the pains of burning can be borne when the soul is all alight. The Jew of old built his altar himself, and he laid the wood ready and the beast prepared thereon. Then came the heavenly fire to accept the sacrifice.

III.

BURDEN OF THE SONS OF MERARI.

"As for the sons of Merari, . . . this is the charge of their burden, . . . the pillars of the court round about, and their sockets, and their pins, and their cords."—NUMBERS iv. 29–32.

DO you ever meditate upon these Sons of Merari? If it had been my lot to take charge of any part of the tabernacle, and I could have had my choice, it would not have fallen upon the curtains, rich as they were with all the colours that could be dyed in the desert; it would have been these cords and these pins. Perhaps some of you have never heard of these Sons of Merari and their daily business.

I often wonder, whether there were any prophetic souls among them, who saw in these cords and pins a promise of that greater temple that was to come, in which they would be no longer required? how they felt, when they removed them for the last time from the tent of the tabernacle? whether

they rejoiced that the more glorious temple was built, or whether they were all like the men of to-day, who see nothing in cords but cords, nothing in pins but pins?

These cords were symbolic of incompleteness, and of their place being thereafter supplied by something nobler. Everything in Nature is incomplete, is hasting forward to the production of something future; and in its incompleteness lies its beauty. Spring is beautiful; and when I see the blossoms blown off by the wind, I think of the Sons of Merari taking out the pins and their cords. Were Spring to remain such, there would be no harvest for the blessing of man. The dawn is beautiful, but its beauty lies in this, that it shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Twilight is beautiful, but its beauty lies in its passing swiftly into night and darkness, bringing on the time of man's repose and the watchmanship of God. Childhood is beautiful, but its beauty consists in its constant changes; every day and every month those who watch children may see changes in them. The cords are lengthened and the pins gain greater strength as the child hastes forward into manhood.

. . . . All love is incomplete in itself, it all

points to something beyond itself; the love of man and woman,—marriage, at once both symbol and sacrament; symbol of the divine love to the human creature, and of the soul's love of its Lord. . . .

The hearing of beautiful music leaves a longing for somewhat; on the most glorious days, when the sky is bluest, sadness comes over the heart, and a desire for truer peace. The most beautiful book ever written has an incompleteness; we feel that the author felt more than he could express. The sayings of the greatest men of this world all show that they have felt this also.

St. Paul seems to be taking down the tent of the past when he says, "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

There may be days—rare days—when we almost wish for Joshua's power to make the sun stand still; when we are tempted, like Peter, to say, "Lord, let us build here three tabernacles." But the Transfiguration on the Mount was but transient; the Lord came down and found a poor epileptic boy waiting to be cured.

Instead of lamenting over the transient nature

of the things of this life, we should be thankful for it. It is of God's loving-kindness and tender mercy that it leads us on; a constant reminder that there are better things beyond. If beauty were not transient it would be a clog to attach us too firmly to this world. As the writer does not give us his best thoughts in his preface; as the poet does not give us his best in the prelude, nor the dramatist in Act the first, Scene the first; as the musician in the overture gives us only hints and promises of still sweeter music to come; so God does not give us His best things now;—we have to take up the cords and the pins of our tent, and move ever onwards to the heavenly and abiding Life in the city that is "laid foursquare," symbolic of completeness.

. . . . The glory of Gothic architecture is in its relationship to ourselves, its incompleteness; something can always be added to it. . . .

All changes in life are beautiful, even those which we call Decay. There is a beauty in the thin form of the old man; for as we look at each plainly-revealed bone, we think of the "pillars and the sockets thereof," and we know that he is about to be unclothed before he can be "clothed upon" with Immortality.

Instead of going about mourning, as so many do, over advancing age, and endeavouring to conceal our grey hairs; instead of lamenting that "we are not the men we used to be," and repining over sickness,—we ought rather to rejoice in these marks of our bodily imperfection.

If we felt our religion as deeply as we ought to do, we should look forward, "through the chinks that Time has made," to the future state where all shall be perfected.

IV.

PALM SUNDAY.

1851.

YOU will remember that during the last five years, we have dwelt, as this day came round, on the principal circumstances connected with our Lord's entry into Jerusalem, and their practical meaning and teaching for us.

Let us briefly review what we have already learned, and see whether yet another lesson remains to be drawn.

The first thing to which I sought to call your attention in this narrative, was the character of that man whose whole history is told in so few words. Seldom has less been said of any man, yet nowhere in history is a fairer and nobler character to be found written of a man.

"When ye shall say, 'The Lord hath need of them,' *straightway* he will send them."

Very beautiful, these words! No time lost in deliberating, in weighing profit and loss; in calculating interest, and considering advantages. The one word, "The Lord hath need," is enough; spontaneously and instantly the gift is bestowed.

Now, of how many of us, professed servants of Christ, could that be said which is here said of this man? Year by year passes on; can it be said of any of us, with regard to our time, our money, our affections, or our interests, "The Lord hath need of them, and *straightway*" we let them go?

Of some, it can be said, with increasing truth, year by year; of others, I can say it faintly; of some, not yet at all. Let this man and his spirit live in the memory of each of us; inciting and impelling us to higher devotedness than we have yet attained.

The next circumstance to which I endeavoured to turn your thoughts was the mingled pomp and humility of that triumphal entry.

Christ enters Jerusalem in triumph, it is true; but it is a triumph that borrows nothing from human splendour, that refuses the aid of all that Man counts exalted. The car of the warrior, the charger of the captain, were not for him; a lowly ass furnishes the instrument of his triumph.

Pause here, and see, how in the life of Christ,—as in those goodly pictures which the pious painters of olden ages drew,—all the Light streams from the Saviour outwards, instead of being shed upon him from without. Christ's glory is inward, not outward; he borrows nothing from circumstance; rather he lends to it. Christ triumphed in spite of the lowly beast on which he rode, instead of borrowing from it, as in the usual triumphs of Man. Everywhere he pours contempt on what Man counts glory, and shows that the true majesty is that of Spirit, not of Sense.

But to many the question will arise, "How came Christ, with his meekness and humility, to submit to the triumph at all? How are we to reconcile the fact of his escaping to the mountains when the people would take him by force and make him a King, with his willing entry into Jerusalem, heralded by the joyful shouts of multitudes?"

The answer is simple. In the one case Christ fled from an honour offered to *himself;* in the other he accepted an honour addressed *through* him to God.

Observe the circumstances, and you will see that it is so. Christ, the breadgiver, the miraculous feeder of five thousand, was to be made a King,—

and he fled to the wilderness. Christ, the humble and lowly prophet, was met with shouts of "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord,"—and the hosannas were accepted, the strewn palm-branches found favour.

In connection with these two scenes in the life of the Saviour, take yet one other, and the triptych will be complete. A third time is Christ the centre of every eye. Again royal robes are made ready, and a crown is prepared for his brow. This time he flees not, neither does he only quietly submit; he goes to meet the dignity, he bares his head for the crown of thorns.

An angel's words were not strong enough to contrast fitly these scenes, or to draw from them all the lessons they contain. Into our hearts the thoughts must sink; there they must work.

Thus much let me strive to say, and no more. In the day of thy prosperity, when all men are thy friends; when thou hast won a name, and men would crown thee for it; when it is *thou*, and not the Good Cause in thy person, that men seek to honour,—escape thou into a mountain alone, and thy soul shall be safe.

In the day when men reverence thee for the truths thou hast taught, or love thee for the service

thou hast rendered; when they welcome thee as one "that cometh in the name of the Lord;"—then meekly accept their offerings, calmly receive their homage.

And in that last and awful day,—if to thee it should ever come,—when the purple robe is prepared in mockery, and the crown of thorns is plaited; when faithfulness to Him to whom thou hast sworn allegiance, is treachery to the world, and the world revenges itself upon the offender; when bitter mockery, cruel taunts, rude buffets are showered upon thee;—then, think of him who wore no crown but the Crown of Thorns, bare no sceptre but the hollow reed of contempt; whose shoulders, it is true, were adorned with the purple, but only that they might be the object of derision to a gaping crowd! Flee, all of you,—as you prize the hope of Heaven, and love your own souls—flee the gilded crown of self-glorification, and go forth, calm in spirit, steadfast in heart, to meet the thorny crown of the world's mockery and contempt.

There is one particular in the narrative of this day's events, to which I doubt if many of you have given the attention I think it deserves. A very small thing this will appear to some of you,—a trifle not worth mentioning.

"And a colt, the foal of an ass."

But were I painting a picture of the triumphal entry, the last circumstance I should be willing to forget were this. Christ's love for the weak, his tenderness for the young, is nowhere more beautifully shown than in this apparently trifling incident.

The same loving heart that forbade the disciples to send away the "little children,"—in the midst of his triumph—aye, and when the shadow of coming suffering was beginning to pass over his soul—that same heart cared for the little ass, and would not that, though to be restored to it before nightfall, it should lose its mother's presence even for a few short hours. Hence the little colt trots gladly on by its mother's side; and a world-triumph—such as never can be repeated—stays in its course for a poor little foal.

V.

FAITH.

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."—HEBREWS xi. 1.

NOTHING is more certainly known and established than that many of the controversies which have agitated Christendom have been wars of words and not of ideas. For instance, one man says we are saved by faith, meaning the belief of the heart; another, who understands by faith a conviction of the intellect, says, Nay, not so. Both are agreed, if they could only understand one another; nothing but want of careful definition of terms keeps them at a distance.

Of all the words of ambiguous meaning with which the New Testament abounds, this one of Faith is every way the most noteworthy. It has been well observed that the Greek word translated Faith, requires to be rendered into our richer

vocabulary by three different terms, according to the connection in which it is employed; these are Assent, Trust, Confidence.

But it will be asked, Is not this want of accuracy a blemish in the Scriptures? If the word is capable of so many different meanings, why not express it in each case differently? The want of accuracy is not a defect in the Bible, it is a defect in human nature itself. It arises from one of the many limitations laid upon the human mind. Look for a moment into that mysterious process, the birth of language. Whatever your theory of its origin, whether you make it human or divine, this much is always certain, Language, which is the direct expression of the mind, takes its shape from individual mind and character. Whatever your mind is, your language will also be; as you think, so you must speak.

Now you will find it is impossible ever to think of a single quality or abstract thing unconnected with its opposite, or with its nearest relative. Try to think of darkness without imagining light; of hope, without supposing fear; of love or hatred, without the object to be loved or hated. Your common speech proves the difficulty, the defect in expression. Does not *fast* sometimes mean to

move quickly, and at others not to move at all? Does not the word *nervous* express both fulness of strength, and its absence in an eminent degree?

No wonder, then, that the word Faith should express, first, intellectual belief, as, to "have faith in Calvinism," "faith in Arminianism;" secondly, that it should stand for the thing so believed, as "the Protestant Faith," "the Lutheran Faith;" thirdly, that it should mean heart-belief, as, "Thy faith hath saved thee;" fourthly, the result of that belief, shown in forsaking evil and cleaving to good; and last, not least, that vision of the Invisible, that realizing of things not seen, which lies at the bottom of all possible greatness.

Now let us examine a little these several kinds of faith, in order to determine their worth and value. But first a few words on Faith in general.

The broad distinction between religion and life, which our theology unfortunately only tends to widen and intensify, is the great reason why this matter of faith is so imperfectly understood. Men speak of Faith as if it were a thing peculiar to religion alone, instead of being, as it really is, at the root of everything in life. Every little infidel has a sneer at the patriarch who left his country and his kindred and his father's house, in search of

a country that God should show him. True, the sneer is foolish, but how are we to cure it? By raving and storming at the scoffer? Nay. By showing him that Abraham only did on a grand scale, what he himself does, every day, on a small one; that he exercised no new power, only carried to perfection an old one. Show him that the men he most admires are kindred spirits to Abraham. Every one of his heroes, it will be easy to show him, was a man of Faith. John Milton, the great hero of politicians and patriots, was he not pre-eminently a man of Faith? His unseen ideal Commonwealth, his England of the future, was to him what the land of promise was to Abraham. And was not Columbus, the hero of the man of science, a child of Faith, too? It was belief in an unseen America that carried Columbus across the ocean. When land-birds and land-plants appeared, the mariners, to a man, believed in America; but through the long years of hopeless endeavour, the long weeks of anxious navigation, he, the man of Faith, had seen America as clearly as they saw it on landing.

The great men of science are necessarily men of Faith. Inductive science is built upon faith. The mere clerks of science, its deductive men, can live

by sight; but it is the astronomer who wants a planet to establish the harmony of his universe, and whose faith in its unseen existence is firm, who becomes its discoverer; it is the Columbus who says, "I must have a continent in the Western hemisphere, to keep the earth's balance true," who is the discoverer of an America.

Let no narrow theological prejudices prevent your seeing and admitting that it is but the transference to God of the feeling with which these men look upon Nature, that constitutes the difference between Newton and Abraham, between Columbus and St. Paul.

But without referring to these notable cases, the necessity of Faith may be shown from our ordinary everyday life. You talk of the wisdom of experience; but I want to know how, without faith as a basis, experience could be built up. You eat, and your hunger is satisfied; you swallow medicine, and your disease is cured; true, these are now the results of experience, but once they must have been the workings of Faith, and if you repeat the experiment, not doubting its success, you are acting by Faith.

Then, again, is not society, human life in its every part, founded upon faith in one another?

How strong is your feeling with regard to certain men; you would trust them under any circumstances, believe in them almost in spite of evidence.

As I said before, without this deep-rooted faith the world would speedily stand still. Trade, friendship, society, the very existence of a commonwealth, would become at once impossible.

Why, then, make so great a mystery on the one hand, or take so much offence on the other, at Faith as a religious feeling and emotion? Show me a day of your life that has not been lived in and by faith, and I will admit that it is no more necessary in religion than in common life.

So much for Faith in general; now for a brief inquiry into the different kinds of faith.

The first meaning of the word Faith is that which might be more accurately rendered Assent, meaning intellectual conviction or belief. About this, two important questions may be asked. How far is a man answerable for his beliefs? and, is this the "saving Faith" spoken of in the Bible?

First, how far is a man answerable for his beliefs?

In the present state of mankind, and with our present shortcomings, this is not a practical question, but one of pure metaphysics. A man ceases

to be answerable for his beliefs the moment those beliefs are the necessary result of the pure unbiassed evidence set before him. Take a case out of daily life, to make this clearer.

It is certain that the juryman who goes into court resolved to hear patiently and intelligently the whole of the evidence set before him, who suffers no prepossession for or against a prisoner or witness to colour the evidence to him, but who gives it a fair and impartial hearing, unmixed by prejudice or liking,—it is certain that he is not answerable for his conclusion; he cannot help it; he has given indeed a "verdict," a true saying.

Now I ask you how often in moral truth this is your case? What question can possibly arise to any of us into which our own likings and dislikings do not more or less enter? The judge is unhappily in most cases a party interested; and what reluctance he shows to have the witnesses who go against him examined; what a disposition there is to overawe the jury by fear, or to coax it by indulgence! Hence, though it be theoretically true that for the opinions he arrives at, however extreme, no man is responsible who has honestly and conscientiously surrendered himself to the evidence, and abolished for the time his own will and liking;

yet, as this is an almost impossible point of virtue, men may be said with perfect truth to be answerable for their opinions; but to God only, not to one another.

It is for the process we are answerable, not the result. God's sunshine is His affair, we are willing to grant; but what about the window? On a dark day it may be well to look into that. I cannot cause the light to descend, it is true; but if my miserable economy have substituted paper for glass, if my abominable laziness have left dirt where there should have been cleanliness, is it not my own fault that I sit in darkness? I may diffract the ray of light and rob it of its purity, or I may receive it pure into a pure vessel.

So much for the first question, How far is a man answerable for his belief? Now for the second.

Is it faith in this sense—that is, assent, conviction of the mind, intellectual belief—that is called in the Scripture "saving faith"?

In order to see whether this kind of faith will save us hereafter, we have only to inquire whether it saves us now: for you may take this as an invariable principle, a rule that knows no exception, that whatever will really save you hereafter, does in some degree save you here.

I ask, then, if men are saved in this world by the propositions they hold? No. Neither shall they be in the next.. Look around you, and see men, holding the most orthodox opinions, living in practical atheism, infidelity, and sin. I repeat, whatever fails to save a man from the power of sin in this world, will be found too weak to save him from its consequences in the next,—Ergo, doctrinal belief is not necessarily "saving Faith."

Hence our calmness when men tell us we cannot get to heaven without holding their opinions. Do their opinions secure themselves from evil? are they a safeguard to them, the holders? Verily no. That which saves them now, all that are saved, is a something over and above this, and until they can show that Baptism preserves the soul from sin, and the Athanasian Creed is a safeguard against temptation,—until they do this, I can never be persuaded that the acceptance or non-acceptance of doctrinal propositions opens and shuts the gates of Heaven.

This is a matter about which we are very calm, for men must see it as soon as they begin to think. They tell us we cannot be saved out of their little ark; but somehow we find we are. They say, "God will not accept you hereafter;" but how if He has

accepted me, even now? "The earth cannot move," said the ancient doctors, "for theory says so." "Nay, but it does," replied Galileo, "and fact shall give your theory the lie."

Hence, we trouble ourselves little with theoretical impossibilities to which we have found a practical solution. Men can demonstrate, if we will only grant their premises, that it cannot be; but we place our foot upon the fact, and no power can shake us. In vain you try to persuade me that I am too far north for the sunshine to reach me, if I am gladdened by his brightness, and warmed by his rays.

But leaving intellectual belief, and all other questions belonging to it, behind us, let us pass on to consider the second kind of Faith, that of the heart.

That this is an instinctive, intuitive, innate power, of which man can never divest himself, I need not tell you. Let us look, however, at some of its chief manifestations, in Patriotism, Loyalty, Chivalry, and Love.

Patriotism is founded on love for an invisible object, the abstract idea of country. It is, therefore, based upon Faith. Look at the deeds that have been done under the influence of this feeling:

see Curtius, leaping armed into the gulf, that his ruin might be the salvation of Rome; see Arnold, that devoted and ever-loved patriot, gathering into his bosom a whole sheaf of Austrian spears, in order to make a path for his countrymen into the enemy's ranks; see Brutus the executioner of his own sons, in order that parental fondness might not seem to interrupt the course of justice. I say, the feeling which prompted these men was the same that led Abraham and Moses, differing only in its direction and object; the look needed only to be turned upwards instead of around, in order to be recognized as the Faith spoken of by St. Paul.

So it is with Loyalty, the reverence for order and law incarnated in a man, reverence for the King, as God's vicegerent and visible symbol. With their politics I have no sympathy, but for the loyalty of the old Cavaliers to Charles, I have intense admiration. He stood to them not merely as the man Charles Stuart, but as the embodiment of Law, Order, Divinity; hence they were willing to lay down all they had for his sake, to peril life and limb in defence of his rights. Who can read the tale of that heroic woman, who, when the life of her beloved Queen and mistress was sought,

bravely made her own frail white arm a bolt across the door to guard her from the danger, and held it there until the shattered bone refused longer to obey her will,—without saying that she did this, not as friend for friend, but as subject for Queen? If we are not loyal now, it is because loyalty lacks objects on which to bestow itself; not because the deep perennial feeling of the heart is less strong than it was of old.

Of Chivalry and Love, we need not speak. We all know the spiritual beauty that belongs to them; the living for some object outside ourselves; the high, the lofty tone that they lend to our lives.

With these great principles, lying so deep in human nature, and with the book of history behind us to show their working, we meet the argument of that shallowest of all schools, which declares man to be a creature entirely selfish. There are men who are prepared to say that when you serve another at your own expense, you are unconsciously selfish, for you are acting with a view to future peace. They would make our prayers only the purchase-money of divine favour to be enjoyed, and our almsgiving the down with which the dying pillow is to be comfortably stuffed.

No! to this blasphemy the book of history will

always give the lie. I see men prepared, at the voice of Patriotism, Loyalty, Chivalry, or Love, to lay down their lives for an unseen idea; and what Patriotism, Loyalty, and Love can effect, shall not Religion be able to accomplish?

Men do believe in justice, for they are just, to their own injury; they do believe in freedom, for they lay down their lives to secure it: shall we not say, too, that they believe in Heaven, when they are content to be poor and despised in this world, in order that they may lay up for themselves treasures, where moth and rust cannot corrupt, neither shall thieves break through and steal?

VI.

"A TIME TO DIE."

"A time to die."—ECCLESIASTES iii. 2.

YOU must all have observed, in the natural world, that the most glorious part of the life of things is that which immediately precedes death. The tree decks itself in its brightest foliage when about to lose its leaves. The sun sets with a deeper, nobler, though somewhat sadder glory than that with which it rose. The dying dolphin exhibits brilliant hues that were never seen in his life; and so the ancients fabled, in that wondrous mythology of theirs, that the swan sang an almost supernatural melody in his dying hour.

Unhappily, it is not so with Man. He too often creeps out of the world, or slips out of it, meanly and shabbily, instead of making a noble and glorious exit. Moreover, in watching the deaths

of all natural objects, we find regularity to be an unfailing characteristic. The earliest spring or the coldest winter does but alter by a few days the duration of plants and trees. But with Man, it is far otherwise. It has been said by one of our poets—

> "Leaves have their time to fall,
> And flowers to wither at the North wind's breath;
> But all—Thou hast all seasons for thine own, O Death!"

And the reason for this is obvious.

For the purposes of discipline, Death must be made uncertain; the Son of man must come as a thief in the night.

The accent with which a thing is said,—to a tone, or half a tone,—makes all the difference to the hearer. One man will say with an air of indifference, "There is a time to die;" and it will sound a mere trite, commonplace remark. Another, with a solemn but gladsome voice, will utter the same words, and all the joyful certainties of Immortality rise up before us. It is the quivering, spiritual atmosphere which surrounds the spoken word that gives its power of reaching the heart.

Now what can we do to rescue this saying from the commonplace that surrounds it, to make it a fresh and a living thought?

In the first place, it sounds unmeaning, because the subject is one that receives but little thought. You all know that Death is a tacitly forbidden topic in good society. How many times in the course of a long life have you gone among men, and found them talking of Death and the Unseen World? Perhaps but once. On every other subject they are eloquent and impressive; but this, the mightiest of all, they agree to forget. The man who seeks for ideas with regard to immortality must be content to go to the Phædo of Plato, and learn from the writings of that ancient heathen what intercourse with fellow Christians has failed to teach him.

The words, "A time to die," sound at first, as if the time were a known and determinate one. But we soon discover that it cannot be so, and from this, if we were wise, we should learn that it is not the time of our death that is important, but the fact itself. The great thing is to get the certainty of the fact fixed in the mind, and then we shall do as men do when they expect any great event, set about preparing for it earnestly and vigorously. What preparation for a bridal, or an earthly pageant! what restlessness until all things be ready! Men should prepare for Death in the

same way; not only by putting their worldly affairs into good order (which is necessary and right), but by meditating on the change that awaits them, and the consequences it involves, until the thought of Death becomes familiar and welcome. This is all that is wanting to destroy the vulgar materialism with which the subject is commonly surrounded.

We look upon Death as a disruption of Life; on our future nature as entirely different from the present; and on Heaven as a geographical place into which at some particular time we shall enter.

But between this world and the next there is less distance than men suppose: the one life is the prophecy of which the other is the fulfilment. Like the germ of the butterfly in the caterpillar, our future nature lies involved in the present; and spiritually (ay, and perchance physically, too), the difference will be less than we suppose, between the two worlds. Heaven is but the making external and objective that which is already an internal reality, as the Judgment is the rendering unto every man the meed his conscience has already awarded.

Neither is the last act of our life more solemn than any other. That is but a material view of it which would make it touch more nearly on eter-

nity, and lay its hand as it were upon the Judgment-seat. Every act of life is as near God as the last, as solemn and as important to our spiritual hopes.

Now the light in which to regard Death, is not that of a breaking, but of a union; it is a beginning, not an end—a closely welding together of our two lives. It brings no startling change to those who have previously contemplated it; it is but the enlargement and enfranchisement of their nature. To imagine a formal, set preparation necessary for death, is a folly. God gives few of us time to prepare for it otherwise than actively, in the midst of our daily work, and surrounded by common objects. It is natural, and it may be wise to wish for quiet and time to reflect; but life is subject to too many destructive and disturbing influences to afford us this security; and we must learn to do without it, by so living every hour as we would do if we could know it was sure to be our last.

St. Bernard's rule is the only safe one: "Before beginning any employment, consider whether it is one in which you would be unwilling that Death should surprise you." And I consider this the only safe rule with regard to all doubtful questions. We

often hear doubts whether certain employments are lawful, and certain amusements permitted to the Christian. These are all to be settled in this simple way: wheresoever a man would be afraid to die, there it is wrong for him to live. Every place that he would be ashamed for Death to fetch him out of, if he be a wise man he will never enter. Every book he would be afraid for Death to peep over his shoulder and find him reading, if he be a wise man he will never open.

But you say, this will make life serious and sad. Serious, I grant,—but if sad, the sadness is that it should be sad. That what is right should be painful to you is sad, because it shows how far you have gone wrong. It is only Sin we need give up, not pure joy or innocent pleasure.

We may also prepare for Death by fair and goodly deeds, on which we may look back with joy when its summons comes. Not that these are able to obtain our admission into Heaven, but that, by proving our faith in the Lord Jesus, they give us the assurance of our acceptance with him.

But I would not have you content with the mere contemplation of Death; you must learn to glory and rejoice therein. The same constant daily thought which we have already said will make

Death familiar to us, will, if carried to its full extent, make it a subject for thankfulness. We shall learn what it does for us and in us; how it unbinds the fetters of the flesh; how it delivers the soul from the bondage of sin; and how it produces the full and final glorification of our nature.

With his death of agony and shame before him, Christ said—

"I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"

And may not we, if He could feel thus with regard to the painful death of the cross, contemplate with joy our peaceful end and quiet grave? How are we straitened by these bonds of flesh and corruption! What an enlargement when we exchange sorrow and suffering for immortality and incorruptibility!

Christianity has not done nearly enough for us yet in getting rid of the fear of Death; it is not sufficiently a joyful faith. The state of Christian art shows the spirit of the faith. We have numberless Crucifixions and Scourgings and Calvary Ascents, but Christianity has hardly yet attempted to represent the risen Lord.

The only way to regard Death in the spirit in

which it should be regarded, is to look upon it from *beyond* it, not from *behind* it. We must see it as it appears to the risen flesh and blood. And this is possible, yea, it may be done by every one of us. We may share the triumph of St. Paul, and the holy calmness of Stephen; we may look upon Death, if we will, as did martyrs and saints of old.

I repeat that this is a hard saying to many; and the sadness is that they feel it is so. It always will be hard, so long as they keep deferring the subject for further consideration, and imagining the time will come when they will be more disposed to enter upon it. Men flatter themselves that the evil in them will somehow perish and die out; that it will die a natural death yet. It must be torn from the heart; it must be rooted out of the soul. We must cut off the right hand of dishonesty, for it cannot lay hold on Eternal Life; we must pluck out the right eye of licentiousness, for it may not see Him who can be seen only of them that are "pure in heart."

On Death, then, we must daily meditate, and the evil practices which would make it a terror to us must be cut off. In remembering that there is a time to die, we must not speculate on when that

time is likely to come, but whether we are ready, if it should come now. The influences by which we are surrounded are so subtle and mysterious, so easily disturbed and put out of harmony, that truly in the midst of Life we may feel we are in Death, and that of any of us, "this very night our souls may be required."

DUTY.

"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."—1 SAMUEL xv. 22.

IT is written in the gospel, that after the Rising of the Lord, that is, in the day of his most glorious manifestation, he put this most pathetic question, "Children, have you anything to eat?"

In that homely question, lies the "commonplace" of all true religion. No doubt there was something sad in it. There must always be something sad in remembering the Mount of Transfiguration, where only yesterday they met together, and so rapt with joy was Peter, that he said, "Let us stop here, and let us build a tabernacle;" but he opened his eyes, and nobody was there! They came down from the mountain, and they engaged once more in common human hopes, human sorrows, and the weary round of the ordinary affairs of life.

One of the strongest proofs of a sound religion is to be thankful for any heights which it is possible to scale, but to be much more thankful for the continuous valley in which human duty is best discharged.

Some people seem to think "commonplace" a term of reproach. Why should it be? "Common sense" is not. It is a frequent saying, "Oh, that is commonplace!" Is it? then it is sure to be good. "But," says one, "I like something out of the common." Do you, my friend? You are very much out of the common yourself, are you not? The great object of a great man's life, is to make the uncommon into the commonplace; until angels' visits shall no longer be accounted visits, because they shall be continuous. Above the rapture of visions, then, more solid in its basis than they, stands something simple and uniform;—people call it Duty.

Its very uniformity is the condition by which it becomes the background of anything considerable. We may not paint backgrounds very bright; the wise painter does not paint glowing colours behind. In life there must always be bread, even in the midst of delicacies. The bread of love, the bread of life,—their beauty comes of their

continuity, that which is every day independent of circumstance, of feeling, of disposition; those things which constitute the very substance of life, their very commonplaceness and continuance are after all what the continuity of the race depends upon.

The groundwork of all this is deep and true. It is TO OBEY. In all true religions, especially in those like the one in which you and I believe, there are at times inducements to spiritual rapture and spiritual depression. In some religions these aspects are the main ones; but Samuel says to the old king—

"To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken (to God) than the fat of rams."

All through Christ's life, he said it was not those who in an enthusiastic, excited, passionate moment, cried, "Lord, Lord," but those who steadily did the will of the Father in heaven, who were acceptable. He did not mean by this to rebuke only the hypocrite, but those who said, "Lord, Lord," in ecstasy—those whose religion consisted of rapture, enthusiasm, and ecstatics; those who forgot, that when three angels came to visit Abraham, his first plain duty was to go and have negotiations with Sarah as to what there was in the larder.

There is in a religion corresponding to these homely commonplace affairs, a principle higher than prayer; deeper than feeling; more admirable than rapture;—the ordinary unvarying principle of Obedience.

Surely, this is set forth, beyond the special meaning, in the parable of the two sons; one of whom showed a graceful readiness and willingness, who was a rapturous person, and when his father told him to go into the vineyard, replied, "Oh, certainly!" with instant acquiescence, but he did not go; while the other was a churl, short in his speech, stunted in his growth, bullet-headed, little to look at, ungracious, unpolished, but right at the bottom. "Go," said his father, "and work in the vineyard." "I shan't," replied he; but he went, whilst his graceful, winning brother did not go. Which did the will of his father? Surely the churl was the more admirable of the two.

But, it may be said, if you could only combine the two! Ah! my friend, that would be perfection; but if they must be separated, if you cannot have graceful manners and obedience, if you cannot have poetry and practice, if courtesy must be barren, and obedience graceless; if we must have the alternative presented, let us have Obedience, though

the fragrant incense and the delicate fat of rams be not there.

Unfortunately a great deal of the religion of the present day attaches far more importance to Confessions of belief, than it does to the downright common sense of honest, unchanging obedience to the dictates of that belief. Too much of our religion has been "experimental," as it is falsely called: too much rapture; too much depression.

Read Psalm cxix., that great lyric of Obedience. Never were the two songs of faith and obedience so sweetly mingled together—

> 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet."
> "Teach me thy statutes."
> "Order my footsteps."

There is as much of poetry and of the practical in that one Psalm as in all other religious compositions. It came from the true soul of a great man.

This Obedience, or as we call it, Duty, is independent of all feeling. Am I secure to-morrow of the emotion which I feel to-day? All things conspire with me and against me. The sun, the clouds, the temperature, a shattered pane, a slamming door, a jarring voice, a flower broken in the night,—all these things have me at their mercy. A pang and a pain

may upset my belief in immortality; a coal-cart going before the window may shut out the sunshine for me; for me the heavenly bodies, even, are at the mercy of dimmed windows, gnats, and flies. Just, perhaps, as I am in meditation, you bring into the room some commonplace matter that has no reference to the subject of my thoughts. Very necessary, no doubt, but still enough to break up my study of heaven, life, or death. A horse running away may check Alexander, or put an end to the rapture of the bard. There are times when the soul is barren, days when the old familiar passages of the poets will not stir you, days of the ordinary and commonplace, days when the common things of life seem to sink below the common and seem offensive in their minuteness, when there seems very little worth having or doing in life, when good is felt to be very far off.

At these times is there nothing for us to do? Yes! for here comes the great solemn cry—"Obey!" Never mind whether it is plain ground or not. "To obey is better than sacrifice." What is sacrifice? In one sense it is ornamental; it never is the ground upon which a man is forgiven, it never was intended as anything but a great symbol. But to sacrifice well requires great feeling, though,

as Samuel said, you had better do as you are told than sacrifice.

Obedience partakes of many characters. It will be accepted whether the conscious determination is present or not. If obedience springs from habit, it may not be loveable, but it is useful, and it is always good. Unconscious obedience is good; the perfectness of a man's habit shows the depth of his original teaching, though there are times when habit sets itself up at the expense of thought, and is to be carefully controlled. Obedience is good in any case. "But," you say, "I often do not think when I do a thing in the course of daily duty." "My friend," I reply, "I am glad you do not; for if it is possible to do right without thinking, it is the perfection of being." You say you are afraid you did it from habit, and not from thought. What are you afraid of? When the Great Day of our Real Life comes, we shall simply obey without thinking, we shall have truth without striving, we shall keep the commandments without a struggle, and, like the flowers, we shall open in beauty and perfection.

Habit is more than effort; the ease with which a man does a thing, without stopping to think, shows how well he has learnt his lesson. It is com-

paratively independent of thought; it may exist upon a vow, it may hang upon an oath, it may last for years upon a promise. The soldier who is once enlisted is not continually thinking of the foundations of his obedience; the dress he wears, the sign upon the banner, the name of the regiment borne by him, even, will assist him. If a man would once a day say solemnly to himself the word "Christian," I believe it would assist him to be better. Independently of feelings, of alternations, of all changeable things which are a part of our nature, in all associations and climates, there is always one thing that is glorious and right, and that is Obedience. Better than symbolism, better than theology, better than sacrifice, underlying all the childishnesses of the Church (attempts to settle what nobody understands), commonplace, true background, the solemn road upon which we tread, homely, homespun; the best foundation, constant, unchanging, is—Obedience to Duty. To do the will of God and keep His commandments,—this is the height of true religion; this is the basis of true religion. The greatest enthusiasts do not throw it aside; the sturdiest rationalists, with all their refusals of belief, are in favour of it; the Romish Church, with all

its pomps, believes in the Commandments; those who believe that without you have the inward sense of the truth of Christ's life and death you cannot be saved, still believe in the little homespun word, Duty. Homespun it may be, but it is better than fine robes put on at sinning times, and on state occasions. What we contend for is homespun, and home obedience. We do not say that a man cannot be obedient, and at the same time rapturous; we do not say it is not possible to have both sacrifice and obedience; we do not say that a man cannot have rapture and prayer, keep the commandments and have ecstatic visions,—but, "Obedience is better than Sacrifice."

Standing erect, firm, always doing what I believe to be right, I would rather do the simple duty lying close to me, I would rather do a little good before I die—even if I have but a few broken tools —for the great Shepherd, Master, and Lord, than I would trust my hope of salvation to the nonsense of theology, to the dreams of enthusiasts, or to hair-splittings about Trinities. From all such, "Good Lord, deliver me."

Do your duty, and then cry, "Lord, have mercy upon me, miserable sinner."

The obedient man is most unlikely to trust in

himself. He who learns obedience will seldom trust in it. The most obedient man is the one who says, "I am an unprofitable servant." It is the poor broken-down obedient one who falls back upon the everlasting Father; puts his trust in Him, and says, "Let me never be ashamed of my hope."

One must guard against looking upon this as "commonplace" in the sense of unworthy. Is not that, after all, the sublimest, which is always there? —the common things of life, are they not the most beautiful? When men get wise they will find that Obedience is not only safety, but that it has a beauty of its own. Its ready presence under all circumstances, its infusion into all things, its continuance when faith is gone, hope low, prayer impossible, trust broken; when God seems for a time out of sight; when Immortality is a dream, when friends are faithless, when the heart is sad;— is not that most noble which is not driven away by things like these? Is not that the grace of graces which stays under these circumstances?

Those who know where true beauty lies, love simple flowers. Not your gaudy exotics of foreign bloom which have to be put in glass-houses,—but the green grass of old England, that knows no time, that the frost cannot kill, which bears the

footprint and still is there, greening by the wayside; which resists all pressure, defies all storms, is always in season, never in bloom (for that is the beginning of decay).

That is Obedience. If you do not see its beauty yet, you will get wiser, perhaps, as you grow older, and learn, at last, its constant, unchanging, unvarying, homely, humble, and yet truly beauteous aspect, which renders it the greatest of graces, and the noblest of duties; better than sacrifice, deeper than prayer, loftier than rapture, more enduring than ecstasy.

It is possible even to turn from the tomb of your best friend and go away and obey. The tomb does not always open out your view of Immortality; sometimes it shuts it in; but even from the grave-side, a man may go back to Duty. It is possible to do your duty with a broken heart; the broken heart which the Lord God will not despise.

"THE RECOMPENSE OF REWARD."

"Who hath divided a watercourse for the overflowing of waters, or a way for the lightning of thunder; to cause it to rain on the earth, where no man is; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man; to satisfy the desolate and waste ground?"—JOB xxxviii. 25–27.

"That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."—MATTHEW v. 45.

IN these two passages, gathered from books so far apart in time, you find an observation on natural things, and the marrying of that observation to moral and spiritual matters.

The one is the notice that a keen observer of this wondrous world had taken of what is, of course, a surprise, that the rain (that great fertilizer) should fall on desert places "where there is no man." There is a little touch of surprise, natural enough to Man, who is apt to believe that this little world—all his—is the centre of things. And it is, perhaps,

a necessity that there be this slight egotism in Man. The Holy Scriptures are all touched with this tone. From the very beginning a little child is made to believe that the sun and moon were made for him; the beasts and the birds were called by Adam that he might name them; and the dominion of the world was given to him. What wonder, then, if Man have egotism! Hence it follows that Man is led to expect what Man is prepared to give; and considering that our waterpots are sometimes short, we cannot help wondering that the watercourse of heaven should be so wasteful;—that the wilderness should have the rain; Man being absent, that God should be present, seems rather astonishing; that, as in common things, when the great man leaves the hall, forthwith all is over, so it has sometimes struck us, if Man be absent, why fruitfulness? if Man be not there, why benediction?

Let us pardon one another our egotisms, for they are not very harmful; there is rather more of amusingness than of mischief in them. It is interesting to us to watch ourselves, and learn therefrom infinite lessons of our own littleness. For it is with a man as with his shadow; it depends upon where the light comes from, whether he be lengthened into a giant or dwarfed into a

pigmy. For some lights of science and knowledge dwarf us down, and restore the little man to his due lowliness. This is sometimes good for us. After a fine elevation of ourselves, considering what Man has done;—the lofty roofs which he has built, so that nature seemed almost outdone;—when we read the words of the poets, thrilling through our hearts, these are things that make us great;—then there comes a time when this greatness is taken out of us, when we must be made into mannikins, reduced to littleness, and made as nothing before Him.

Men of science come, and they tell us of the infinite worlds which the strange poetry of astronomy reveals—that science, the most exact yet the most romantic, whose tools are arithmetic, whose revealers are mathematics; telltale of stars whose light has not yet reached the world, travel as fast as it will; telltale of how there was a Pleiad once, which has now ceased to exist, as far as our sight goes. And when we begin to sneer at the largeness of their figures and get impertinent, these men bring us the way-bill of the heavens, and say, there will be an eclipse on such a day next year; they give us an almanac for three years hence, so that the seamen may know when to go out, and when to

come home. What can we do but break out into the deep and pathetic cry of one of old—

"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him?"

So we grow great in the light of the deeds of great men; so we grow little again in the light of science and its wondrous revelations.

Now, then, having pardoned one another for the little bit of egotism in these verses—astonishment at the rain, sun, and blue sky, where there is no man, we go on to learn some lessons from it. And first the lesson of a bountiful God. For Man is greedy; our needs are many and our wants are great; and it behoves us to think of the "Great bountiful God, ever blessed," as the ancients said, God ever happy, ever rejoicing, large-hearted, large-handed, abundant in grace for His children. Men will never rise into greatness until their God is a God abundant in mercy. That great, large-hearted David,—whenever he prays to his God, he is bounteous in his adjectives and abundant in his epithets; and he is right, for God's feasts are not like your niggardly banquets, where your economy looks through your penuriousness.

The great secret of some people is to make a

little go a long way, how to cover a large space with a small quantity; but God's mercies are heaped up, pressed down and running over. See this bounty of God—rain falling where there is no man—sun shining where there are only a few lizards and insects creeping about. Shall we, only, grow great in the abundance of God's gifts and tender mercies? Why should not the little lizard have the sunshine? Why should man monopolize the whole?

I have stood and looked far out upon the dreary waste of sand where there was no man, but there was abundant life. We say, "What a waste of sunshine!" But we forget it is God's, and part of His strange variegated thoughts. The God that we should worship—He made the lizard, He created the beasts of the earth; He takes pleasure in the fantastic forms of nature; He looks down into the depths of the sea, and sees the little shells there. All these are His pastimes and great pleasures; these are the abundant works of the plenteously merciful God.

Therefore there is a direct joy in remembering that God sends His rain upon the desert where no man is, and from it we learn His bountifulness, the infinite variety of His pleasures, graces, and thoughts.

Now, in contemplating the infinite fulness of God, among the many thoughts that have come to the sensitive mind of man, we have this—that all His great gifts are open to His least creatures. It is a rebuke to you and me, in our little fantastic finery, to think that the lady-bird, with its red coat and three or four spots upon it, is a sufficient recipient of the sunshine of God.

And there is another lowly lesson—that man is not as necessary as man thinks himself. It is a rule with most painters, whether in water-colours or in oil, that no landscape can be complete until you put a little man in the corner. There is some truth in it. No matter how diminutive the figure is, we must have a man in. What, all that sunshine by that great master, and no man to enjoy it! We should not approve of it. And so artists —those who paint by desire, and those who paint by contract—think that it is necessary to have a man in the landscape. Perhaps for a man's painting it is needful for a man to be in the picture; but for God's pictures this necessity does not always exist. The poor ostrich, or the serpent that crawls, or even the flies in the sand, may be a sufficient cause for all the great sunshine, and the sweet rain that comes upon the desert. So I do

comfort myself with thoughts of a bountiful God who loveth all His works.

And then I remember that this rain which falls upon the desert, where no man is, has a great lesson for us in utilities; for we are apt to look but a little way under the surface, and to believe that anything that goes deeper than that is waste. Sometimes more rain falls than usual, and what are the consequences? There are floods; and they interfere with your convenience, and you say, "What is the use of three inches?"

There are deep places in the earth. As Job says, "He made storehouses for the deep," to enrich which He needs something more than a passing shower, so that when the dry times come, the deep places of the earth may give forth their stores. Yet you say the rain that falleth upon the desert, where no man is, falls in vain. The desert has a place in God's economy. What drying airs, what evaporations into clouds for future rain for us, what wholesome breezes may spring up from it! How healthful sand is! for by its very barrenness it overcomes too much luxuriance.

But transfer these things to the words of our Lord, because they introduce us to a better region still,—the moral and the spiritual. When the Lord

said, "He sendeth rain upon the just and upon the unjust," there was no egotism there. Egotism was not in the speaker, but it was in most of his hearers. Now do you never feel in your life that it is strange the rain should never fall upon your moral garden, in which you never worked once on a Sabbath-day in your life? That admirable garden of yours, in which you never sang anything but the melodies of the saints, that *that* should receive no more care from the sun, and no more life from the dew, and no more rain from the clouds, than that garden of the unjust and irreligious man who lives opposite?—it seems not right! Was it proper, that after a poor man's vineyard had been taken by a great king, the dews should yet be kind to it? Ought not the heavens to make an example of somebody? Land gained by fraud, ought it not to bring forth thistles for ever afterwards? Such is the cry of all men once or twice in their lives, until they have learnt the larger wisdom, and the deeper patience that comes by understanding.

Man's justice is poetical in its administrations. One great use of the theatre is that you do sometimes see justice done, for it is no good going to the police court for it. But you do get justice—although it is poetical justice—in the play, and you

know what that means. Poetical justice is what most of us like; and, therefore, at the end of the play, we love to see rewarded every man and woman who has played well throughout—the women to be brought to the hymeneal altar, and the men who have behaved well to have their virtue rewarded, and a crown put upon the head of the just. That is the reason why men used to revile William Shakespeare; because he would not divide the sheep and the goats properly before the curtain fell. Instead of Hamlet making his constitutional speech to his loving subjects, there is darkness and gloom—Ophelia broken-hearted—Hamlet dead—the stage diffused with bitterness—the good and bad men alike trodden underfoot. And so it went on in all his plays, till men said that was not poetical justice. But Shakespeare had simply endeavoured to paint human nature, and this reveals little of poetical justice. The rain falls on the unjust, the sun rises upon the evil as well as on the good, and gives light to the children of darkness. Shocking, is it not? But it is so, for the sun is very impartial; he lights the king's palace and the beggar's hovel—the houses of the saints and the dens of the sinners. It is the little children's way of setting the world right that

you and I should like, you know, so that the good people should have all the good things, and the bad go without; and if you could have the ordering of the world it would probably be so. What a share of good you would have! But it is not so.

Now, a man may know a thing to be, and yet rebel against its being. Are you reconciled to the facts, or do you still sometimes think that such a good person as you really ought to have got on? I know many of you are *not* reconciled.

You are, for instance, in trade. You always sell the quality you profess to sell. But somehow or other you do not get on; you are poor, taxes are heavy, and children are frequent—you do not prosper. And over the way there is a bad man—bad more or less—short in his weights (so it is said), and he gets on bravely. Now, did you never have a twinge that this was not quite the right sort of thing? that you ought to have got on, and he ought not to have prospered?

These things are hard to get over, and they lead to wider questions. Knowing the effect, it leads us away into doctrines of Providence, amongst which are those curious doctrines that are floating about the world, of Special Providences, and anticipations of Providence. For instance, if a great accident

occurs somewhere, those who escaped, escaped "providentially." But people never ask whether those who were killed, died "providentially." The one is taken and the other is left; and I have often seen the best taken and the worst left. But you will say, "The best is taken and the other left, to give a little more time to repent." You must learn something more of the Creator, than to think that He deals out such a species of favouritism.

Again, little Man is writing upon the heavens. He groups the stars together, and he calls one set Cassiopeia, and another Orion, and a third the Wagon. There is something noble in calling them constellations, but there is also something ludicrous. Thereby the stars and the heavens, in their motions, are brought to appear to go in the harness of man. But they calmly go on their appointed paths, for all his fancied groupings.

Christ says—for the just and for the unjust the same rain, and the same sunshine. Why, then, should we believe in these Special Providences? Simply because it is our weakness; we do want to see good things measured to the good. They are; but in a very much deeper-down sense than in those petty impatiences set forth by you.

Now, I would fain lead you away from all these

"Special Providences" and "fickle-isms" to that deeper and more wondrous piety—that lowly, lofty, humble, noble view of God, which shows Him, not as a favourite, having favourites, giving favours, but as giving to all His children all blessings, all chances, all opportunities, and leading them by this solemn equality to work out for themselves better uses and employments of His blessings,—a higher, or a lower life, as they will.

Such a view of God's dealings takes us away from the thought of reward and punishment, for we are very much too apt to look upon the blessings of life as rewards. How it takes the conceit out of us to find that bad people have got them too! It is only when we weed out this constant notion of reward and punishment, and when we look at discipline in its place, that we can understand the justice of these things. God's great mercies are for all folk; they are not intended for reward, but for the food of daily life. God has given me liberty to be a bad character, or a good. I have the sunshine to abuse, or to use, to prosper upon, or to waste, to be pious in, or to be wicked and unrighteous under. Such is life! Yet we are a little rebellious. The cure for such rebellion is to remember that these rewards and punishments,

as we call them, these are not the things that go to make up the life; it is what is in the warp and the woof of the man.

It is rather a vulgarity to look into a man's pocket to see if he has been rewarded or not. The true search is for the flaw, the stain, the spoil, the loss, that there is in a man;—that is where the true retribution is found. "Be sure thy sin will find thee out." That used to be talked to me when a schoolboy, but by-and-by I found that sins were not found out in the way I believed they would be. And yet, be sure, thy sin will find *thee* out, in a damaged soul and spoiled body and shortened days; in a deep spiritual sense. And in order that every act may find us out, it is needful that these outward gifts be given to us all, to use or spoil, to stain or glorify, as the case may be.

Thus the only method to take out of us this querulousness is to remember that each man has his recompense of reward in him or on him, and not with his external gettings at all.

I know that such is the cursed love of wealth among some of you that you would even have your face scarred for a thousand a year. For no distinctions of any kind—outward gettings, rewards, or punishments—will I lose an eye. No! I would

not damage the intellect, or lose the tenderness of conscience, or have my body injured, for all the wealth of the world; I would rather be a perfect man and no more, than have all your dirty annuities. What would some of you do if you were offered a thousand a year—paid quarterly—for a little bit of your soul? Would not you cheat, and lie a little in business for it? Nobody would know it, you know. "Well, sir," you say, "don't tempt me." But would you not yield to the temptation? I say you would; and you would never be the same man again, not in the eternal years. You would be stained, bent, crooked, spoiled. Men have come to think very lightly of the wounds which the spirit suffers by low and mean doings, so that they are not convicted by the magistrate, and the sentence carried out by the gaoler.

But, whether your sin is found out or not, what matter? It will find *you* out.

Just so a man never speaks the truth, nor does a good thing, but it goes into the very fibre of him, enlarging his opportunities, and so at last he learns the calm, quiet esteem of conscience.

The sun is given to the unjust as to the just, and one of the sweetest graces that years can bring is that even, calm, quiet tolerantness, which looks out

upon the outward world and its seeming injustice, with a quiet eye, knowing that inwardly righteousness brings its reward. The holly tree is very prickly in its lower boughs, but when it grows to be a tall tree, it is quite smooth in its upper foliage. It wants the prickles that the cattle may not reach it, but when it grows up the prickles are not necessary.

So, perhaps, it may have been with you, in your youth, to have this fine sense of justice, this rampant desire to serve the wicked out. But all these things pass away when man is wiser, and he learns the tolerance that comes by meditating upon God.

The true reason for being quiet, is to watch the Almighty,—so gentle to sinners, so tolerant to man. Can you not be at once patient, when you remember that for forty years God has put up with you?—and what He has put up with from you, yourself only knows.

We are, therefore, to be tolerant to the intolerant, merciful to the unmerciful; that is the last fruit of a wise man's life—gentleness to the froward, mercy to the hard. And the reason, I say, is this, "for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good." He giveth bread to the needy, and

to those who have abundance, for He is the wise and tolerant God.

And so at last a man learns the wisdom of looking upon these things as the sweetest evidence of God's bounty, justice, and mercy; and he learns rather to look upon the "House not made with hands" as that wherein shall be written at last the results of life, the retribution of evil, the consolation of the sorrowing, and the reward of the wronged. So I, for one, am now reconciled that righteousness is not necessary in order that the sun should come; I am not angry now that the flowers of the unrighteous man are as large, and sometimes sweeter than those of the righteous man.

Let it be so, it is good for us. The more spiritual we become, the more we look unto the fulness of the Spirit for "the Recompense of Reward."

"THE SWELLING OF JORDAN."

"If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"—JEREMIAH xii. 5.

IT were an old tale to tell how the thoughts suggested by the running river have ever been dear to the sad man's heart and the wise man's soul. For the running of the river has ever been like the running of the lives of men. Among the quiet fields, past great cities and wide plains, and at last through checks and changes to the great sea; so runs the river—a lasting symbol of human life.

And of all the rivers of the earth, dearest to the thoughts of men is that famous river Jordan. It is not loved for any beauty of its own, for it has little comeliness for men to delight in; it has never known navigation, and is of small commercial

value. It runs through a dreary scene into the Dead Sea; and if it were simply a river, unblest by man, and unglorified by story, it might be counted one of the least.

There are great rivers which flow with mighty volume through scenes of loveliness, but there are rivers which, having but scant beauty, are more glorious than they. To the eyes of the commercial traveller, there is no great beauty even in the Rhine, because he finds it uncrowded with vessels of trade. The fair river is stripped of its beauty to the vulgar mob who stare along its banks, because they know nothing of the glory that it gathers from the deeds which have been done upon it.

But this river without a ship, contributing so little to man's sustenance, is dear to men by reason of its history. Let those who worship bulk, and who think that bigness makes beauty—let them glorify the big streams of the Far West, whose glory has yet to come. They have a wealth of water, it is true, but it is a wealth of water only. For the fairer wealth of association, what river is there to compare with Jordan? There were feet washed in Jordan which should for ever make it glorious. There was One baptized in Jordan

whose memory should for ever make it sacred. Who, seeing the little stream, fails to think of its four thousand years of history? Over it passed Jacob with his staff, while the river ran low. Telling his story afterwards, he says, "With my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands." The poor old vagabond patriarch had become the father of a great people. Just now I read you the story of the Jews passing over it. David by it sojourned, and sang his psalms; by its banks Elijah dwelt, a great man, moving sternly and loftily through a stern time. To tell you the history of Jordan is but to tell you the old sweet Scripture story through. And the river was handed over to the Christian hosts years afterwards. It and the places on its banks have given names to our little chapels; and this, instead of a thing to be sneered at, is a thing to be praised, for deep down in the depths of a nation's heart must be the love which finds expression in such a way.

Some English people have had their children baptized in the water of Jordan; and the superstition is lovely, for man is not a creature of calculation, but a creature of passionate fancies, and the fetching of water from the Jordan for the

baptism of a British child only shows the love for the river which lies in the hearts of the people. That lovely superstition lives; for the heart changes not, its glories die not out.

Jordan has got into poetry as the symbol of the passage to the better life. We speak of passing the stream of Jordan, meaning the stream of Death; just as we say "across the water," meaning that we leave our own sweet land for some far-off place of promise. Jordan was the little silver line which separated Canaan from the outer world; and the Jew, in his captivity, looked upon it as dividing him from the city of his passionate desire, while he dwelt in a city he had but scant liking for. What wonder that Christian souls have called Death, the Jordan, and spoken of their holy land as Canaan! To pass over Jordan has long been a proverb for death, and the fields of Canaan flowing with milk and honey, a sweet symbol of the Christian's place of rest.

Isaac Watts, who, with all his littleness, stood sometimes upon Pisgah and saw the land of promise from its heights, has fixed the fancy in a hymn which has found an echo in many a heart.

> "Could we but climb where Moses stood,
> And view the landscape o'er,"

who knows but what, dry-shod, we might pass the river like the Jews of old?

Among the strangenesses of its story, is the fact that the first to sail upon it were men from the Far West. It was first subdued to their keels. He who reads aright should see in that the fulfilment of an old prophecy.

The use made of the river in the book of Jeremiah is, of course, peculiar. Jeremiah is a prophet in the Scriptural sense; not an almanac-maker, a foreteller of the weather. A prophet in the true sense is a man to whom God has given the power to see, not merely the future, but the future through the present.

Jeremiah—a deep-hearted man, and therefore a sad man; a poet, and therefore pathetic; a righteous man, and therefore a stern man—looks upon the defection of his people sadly. Looking upon his people, and regarding alike their sinful palaces and their sinful hovels, he despairs. Neglect seemed to flourish, and the priests of the Lord seemed to have lost their faith. God's presence was grown like some far comet, erratic, not to be counted on; showing itself in flashes of intermittent glory.

So the prophet's heart began to fail him, and he

began to know that despair which is known only to the brave, and which the bravest must endure at times. Neglected, forgotten, unnoticed; and all things, notwithstanding his warning cry, going to sheer destruction, he looked upon it all as one might look upon the land of his love sunk beneath the flood, and ask, "What can one do to save it or restore it?" He cries out to God—

"Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root: they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit: thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins."

He cries, "I am alone. Thy priests have left me, and Thy temples are profaned." Thus the great, angry, passionate, poetic prophet calls the Almighty to account, as he himself is called to account by God. And in this, man is not unjustified. He has a right to ask of God His ways, and to know that the earth is not utterly forsaken by its Creator.

In that wondrous burst of poetry I read just now, he asks, in words which are beautiful, though full of blame, what would they do,—if now they fainted and forgot,—what would they do when the great floods came; when sorrow should come upon them in its fulness; when

the tabernacle should be deserted, and the temple shamed.

"If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

For the Jordan, a scanty stream which would almost gasp to death in the summer sun, is given to great and sudden risings. It has on each side two banks, an inner and an outer bank; and between these lie great reaches of desolate land, which, in the rainy season, the river overflows; and when between those wider bounds the great stream comes down, the lion is driven from his lair, and the whole space is laid under a waste of waters. "And now," says the prophet, "if thou art so sad, what wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

So, because of the aptness of the simile and the glory of the stream, men borrowed that phrase and applied it to the affairs of life; and if one should come crying out loudly about small troubles and little evils, fretful and rebellious because the small things of life did not go well with him, it came to be asked, "If thou art cast down in time of little trouble, what wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

There are some words which, apart from their meaning, have a ring of beauty about them; they sound poetical almost before we know their meaning, and at first hearing we feel their loveliness. There are phrases whose truth glorifies their beauty, as rich wine glorifies the goblet; phrases in which we find such gathered fragrance from the fields of God as leaves us with a sense of the divinest beauty. We find a beauty in them which is wanting in the dry utterance of even a deep truth.

And of these sweet sayings of which the Scriptures are full, there are few more beautiful than this in our text.

Its meaning is, then: If thou art so readily overcome, if little burdens weary thee, and little doubts are too much for thy faith, how wilt thou do when the stream of trouble is full? If it be too much for thy strength to ford Jordan when the stream is low, how wilt thou do when the river swells, when the great floods come, and the stream grows wide and deep?

For some of you, the troubles of life are but as little pools; yet little pools can make great shipwreck of little craft. And if the craft be a child's, the sorrow for its wreck may be great and true. The child who loses his little boat in the brook

may grieve as greatly as the merchant whose fair craft goes down in the deep ocean.

But to some people there come times of darkness when the heart fails, and the river is hard to ford; and it is a wise man's duty to look upon the possibility of this, to examine himself, to ask, "Oh, my heart, how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" It becomes a wise man to ask how he will bear himself when the rivers of life grow wild and wide; when they come down and carry away those we have loved most truly; or when, worse than loss, the friend grows false, and we are left, amidst care and trouble, to ford the great stream alone.

Or when the old man loses his children, and is left alone in age; when the young plants die, leaving the old and withered tree alone. This is hard,—one of the hardest things of life—for a man to outlive his posterity; to bring children into the world, and to see them depart; to linger, an ancestor of a dead posterity—this is hard. To be a lonely mother, whose joys are dead, whose occupation is gone; to be a father with the staff of the shepherd, and with no flock to guide.

Ah, if these sorrows come to thee, how wilt thou meet them, how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan? To live too long for joy; to see life

become one great disappointment and disgust; to meet the day when the wise man's sad verdict, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," is written across the whole concern; to find kings are knaves, and gold a liar; to catch the butterfly and only soil your fingers; to cry, as poor David had to cry, "Why do the wicked prosper?" to find the whole world out of gear; to believe in that falsest, saddest utterance, "There is nothing new, and there is nothing true;"—this is the time when a man may find a tragic wonder in the homely phrase, "How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

There is, I say, a tragic wonder in the words, when in face of great trouble they come right out of a strong man's heart. When the heart is happy and all things go well, this is the best possible of worlds. There is nothing more easily to be borne than the contemplation of improbable troubles. It is easy to say in happiness, "God is good; it is all right." But when love has been spent, and love has been wasted; when pleasures entice us no longer, and the friend grows faithless and flees, what is left for us? We can but cry, as did they on the little lake of Galilee, to Him who came like a spirit across the waters—

"Lord, save us: we perish!"

It is not for me to tell you in what fashion sorrow may come to you. Each man for himself must one day see the waters swell—must see the Jordan rise. It will come to each in torrent, like some mountain stream.

At the end of life, to every one of us, there is a great swelling of Jordan; and, however wide and deep the stream, its waters must be passed. There is no escape from that last crossing of the river of trial. The brave man turns his face there very often, though sometimes to the bravest comes a shrinking such as bathers feel with one foot in the sea. But the brave man turns there resolutely, and asks himself in wise preparation, "How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" How wilt thou face that stream? These are questions a man must often, in times of stillness, put to himself.

And if, perchance, a day should come when faith is frail; when the order of God seems an eminent disorder; when a man arraigns the Almighty, and asks Him, as Job did, if He knows what He does, —if such a day should come, he must prepare himself thereto as best he may.

And with however much philosophy we learn to look upon these things, however wisely we may

reason upon pain and sorrow, they are pain and sorrow still. Contemplation will not rob them of their harshness. The child may learn to say, "The bee stings, the bee may sting, the bee can sting, the bee has stung," but will all his repetition stay the stinging? Bees will sting in stinging time, despite his full acceptance of that fact. And despite recognition and contemplation, sorrow remains to us sorrow. Shall Rachel, knowing of the land to come, cease to weep for her children? Shall not Christ himself, standing beside the tomb of his dead friend, and knowing all, give himself over to a human grief, and weep for Lazarus? The time of tribulation comes upon the best prepared heavily; but upon him who shrinks most, it comes heaviest. Preparation can be made, and is not unavailing.

But about that last passage of Jordan there is this: it must be made alone. A lonely passage across that lonely stream. No friend may follow to cheer us, no lover, however dear, support us if we fail. In all other troubles there may be comforts; if the arms of Moses fail, he may find upholders; but here we go alone. Those who go with us down to the banks must leave us there.

When they turn away with their last words, when thou lookest on the dark waves of the river of death, how will it be with thee, " How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan ? "

Yet will the brave man, as I said, contemplate this often, and find therein a wise exercise. He cannot avert danger, but he can lessen fear. No preacher, no prophet, no poet can prevent his being stung at stinging time ; but his constant and brave contemplation of trouble may so prepare him, that he, though well-nigh carried away by the river, may yet pass safely through.

It is written by one who knew the swellings of Jordan, that to the faithful the stream was shallow, whilst to the doubters it was deep ; that the depth of the stream varied with him who crossed ; as faith failed, the waters grew higher. Bunyan knew the stream, and in his book is written the true story of the swelling of Jordan : the trustful goes over almost dry-shod, but over him who is faint and faithless the waters gather.

To the Christian, at this last passing of the stream, may come such an understanding of the divine Love as will help him to go through, even with joy. As long as love lasts naught is wrong.

Until God's Love fails us, we know no fear. By the fulness of our faith in His Love the river grows shallow; in the shallows of our fear His Love cannot be mirrored, and we see only the depths of our despair. Human love will not avail us here, but the Love of God abideth with us. Shall a woman forget her sucking child? An almost impossible possibility! But God forgets us not. Can a woman forget her sucking child? Just possible. But the Almighty forgets not the creature He has made.

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."

The infinite pity of a great man for a child, what is it but the gospel of God written in a loving epistle! Sweet are the epistles of the loving God! And that infinite love of a mother, and the great love and pity of a father for a child, are a gospel written by the Holy Ghost.

"Could we but make our doubts remove,
Those gloomy doubts that rise!"

At times the heart is glad to find its difficulties stated in the very words of these old hymns. But remember that if it is not given to us to stand with

Moses upon the heights of Pisgah, and to view the Promised Land, into that Land God sent the Heavenly Spy, who returned to tell us of its glories. And we know that beyond the stream awaits us the House of many mansions, the Land of Eternal Peace.

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